

# Michael's Snippets

Just a few bits and pieces that I found interesting

1. E-Male - the way to a healthy heart
2. Backache? You're better off with an osteopath than your GP
3. Food for Thought
4. Hernias - Men Only?
5. Fancy that.... On your bike?

## 1. **E-Male - the way to a healthy heart**

In countries whose diet is rich in vitamin E there is less heart disease than in the UK. Your doctors should know about this after a study of 2002 patients with narrowing of the arteries (atherosclerosis). Half of them had a daily dose of vitamin E and the other half a placebo. Although nearly all the patients had angina too, the vitamin E group had 75% less risk of suffering a non-fatal heart attack. This protective effect of vitamin E was apparent after 200 days of taking either 800 or 400 IU daily.

It's not just men who benefit - there were 300 women in the study, so everyone should be getting extra vitamin E. Good food sources are pure cold pressed oils like extra virgin olive oil and cold pressed safflower, rapeseed and sunflower oil, almonds, hazelnuts, sunflower seeds, wheat germ, avocados, eggs and even peanut butter will add significant amounts to your diet.

Are all doctors now advising a daily dose of this cheap and harmless supplement? Of course not, they're too busy warning us not to believe in "extravagant" claims for supplements, yet an extra 400 units a day is good heart insurance.

## 2. **Backache? You're better off with an osteopath than your GP**

Backache costs £500 million a year, 50 million lost working days and 12 million visits to GPs but they aren't the best people to look at your aching back. A study of GPs in southern England showed that many of them fail to carry out the most basic examination of patients with backache. Some fail to recognise serious symptoms which should suggest immediate hospital treatment and a significant number of them fail to give any practical advice on activities like gardening, lifting, exercises, driving or general fitness.

Properly qualified osteopaths are more experienced at treating back problems, devote much more time to their patients than the average 5 minute GP consultation and get their patients on their feet and back to normal activities in the shortest possible time. To find your nearest Registered Osteopath look for the designation 'DO' in Yellow Pages. Anyone calling themselves an Osteopath has a legal requirement to be accepted by the General Council and Register of Osteopaths. My serious advice – steer clear of anyone (other than a Registered Chiropractor), who claims to be a "manipulator!"

## 3. **Food for Thought**

In spite of all the publicity about the benefits of healthy eating, most people still haven't grasped the simple basics and of those that have, they're nearly all women. What's more, the level of understanding is very geographical. Surveys reveal that on average 25% of women know that they should be eating five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, but only 8% of men got it right. As far as knowing what fibre is, the south east comes top with 34% but Wales is well and truly at the bottom with only 18%.

Sadly knowing and doing are very different. 14% of the population of London actually eat the right amount of fruit and vegetables and they're top of the list, and not surprisingly, with a miserable 4%, Scotland is at the bottom. These facts explain why our European neighbours, who eat far more fibre rich vegetables, fruits, salads and wholegrain bread than we do, call constipation "the English disease".

#### 4. **Hernias - Men Only?**

Contrary to popular belief women get hernias too. They may be hereditary, the result of sport, carrying children, lifting the shopping, or moving bundles of heavy files around the office. Whatever the cause, one in every eight sufferers will be a woman. Traditional surgery means four or five days in hospital, no driving for at least two weeks and six to eight weeks off work, rising to three months for manual workers or a return to strenuous activities.

But all this has changed. At a major international conference organised by the British Hernia Centre, surgeons from around the world described the latest techniques. Under local anaesthetic, a small incision is made, the bulge pressed firmly back and a piece of fine mesh inserted to strengthen damaged muscles. Within an hour the patient walks out of the operating theatre and can eat and drink straight away. Gentle exercise is fine on the following day and most people are back at their desk in a week and at manual work in two.

#### 5. **Fancy that.... On your bike?**

Cycling is conducive to health and vigour in women according to French physician M. Lucas-Championnière. It's good for muscles and lungs and the pleasures of cycling are an inducement to women to take health-giving exercise rather than being couch potatoes.

The good doctor's only reservation is the matter of the saddle, which is not adapted to the anatomical necessities of women. As the body leans forward pressure is brought to bear on the lower rim of the pelvis - an unnatural position which when combined with incessant movement of the legs causes "irritation and discomfort, if not more serious mischief".

He advises cycle manufacturers to give their attention to this detail - and 122 years after his original article in 1895, we're still waiting for a better saddle.