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web page: www.headachedrugs.com

(Our interesting radio podcast show is on the site, and on Talkzone.com)

Exercise, Weight Loss and Supplements

Exercise

Exercise will sometimes help headaches. It certainly is crucial for weight loss. To get 80% of the benefits of exercise, you only need to think of exercising in little chunks of time – 10 to 20 minutes. Most people are able to fit it more easily into their life when thinking this way. First thing in the morning, getting up and walking or using the treadmill or riding the bike for 10 or 15 minutes provides you with at least the minimum daily exercise. We are looking for 20 to 30 minutes on average, but 10 or 15 minutes will do. For weight loss, we need to increase it to 40 to 60 minutes daily. Having a treadmill or a bicycle at home, a headset for walking, or belonging to a health club can help.

Weight Loss

(visit <http://www.sparkpeople.com/> - good free site)

Permanent weight loss is difficult. It takes a huge effort, and a change in life style and behavior. It never comes about by saying "I need to watch my weight, lose a few pounds and exercise". It only really comes about via a concerted effort where exercise and weight control are a main project in your life. You need to get up that morning thinking about it and thinking, "how am I going to get my exercise and what am I going to eat today." Recently, a university studied over 5000 people who kept weight off long-term. Some of the keys to long-term weight loss, which all of these people seemed to find on their own, included the following:

7 Keys to Long-Term Weight Loss

1. Exercise 40-60 minutes daily (walking, biking, treadmill)
2. Graze (small meals throughout the day)
3. Portion control
4. Count calories (or points; Weight Watchers is a good program)
5. Weigh yourself often
6. Eat low-fat foods
7. Do NOT diet

Supplements for General Health

Most herbs/vitamins have not held up to scrutiny; many have turned out to be harmful. Even multivitamins are questionable, particularly in men (a recent study indicated that men who have prostate cancer may have a more severe form of the cancer if they were taking multivitamins). The following have held up to scrutiny.

Calcium

As we age, our absorption of calcium goes down. After age 45, most people, particularly post-menopausal women, should probably take calcium supplements. Calcium is found in milk, yogurt, cheeses, broccoli, tofu, some fruit juices or fortified cereals, and some other foods.

Calcium citrate has advantages over calcium carbonate. Citrocal Caplets plus D are a good form of calcium and D; they have 315 mg. of calcium plus 200 IU of D; the usual dose is one or 2 twice a day. Our system cannot absorb more than 500 mg. of calcium at one time. Consult your physician. To learn about calcium, <http://www.nih.gov/> (and then search calcium) is a good site.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is important for skin and bones, and it helps to prevent a number of cancers (and probably Multiple Sclerosis). Most people in colder climates are low in Vitamin D, as we are not in the sun enough. 1200 units per day should be taken, at least, of Vitamin D3, not D2. Almost all Vitamin D supplements (but not the D in multivitamins) are D3, which is the kind that we want. Most people need to take a Vitamin D supplement. Do not take more than 2,000 units of D without consulting your physician. If you take calcium with D, you probably still need to take an extra D supplement.

Omega-3's (Fish/Fish oil/Flaxseed)

These have held up as beneficial for the heart, moods, and possibly headaches. Eating fish is good, particularly fatty fishes (tuna/salmon/trout/mackerel), and fish oil supplements are also beneficial. On the back of the fish oil bottle, choose the brand with the most EPA and DHA. Taking 1 or 2 per day is recommended. In studies, much higher doses have been utilized. Flaxseed capsules, or flaxseed itself, are also helpful. There are other sources of Omega-3's, such as tofu (and soybeans), walnuts, and canola oil.

Aspirin

If you are at risk for heart disease, your doctor may recommend daily aspirin. Aspirin may help prevent heart attacks, strokes, and certain cancers. The dose is usually one (325 mg.) aspirin (Bayer or generic) a day. Baby aspirin (81mg) or ½ aspirin (162 mg.) may be sufficient. The dose varies from person to person. Eventually we will test people's blood to determine the correct dose. In general, I recommend one (325mg) aspirin per day. Aspirin can cause stomach ulcers; if it hurts your stomach or causes heartburn, stop it, and consult your physician.