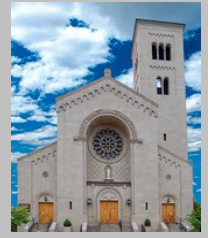


Parish Nurse Newsletter



SPRING 2011

"The wise man should consider that health is the greatest of human blessings. Let food be your medicine." □

Hippocrates

Omega 3 Essential Fatty Acids for a Big Fat Healthy Brain

Something has been going on since 1945: the rates of depression have increased world wide, and the age of onset is shifting downward - younger people are being affected. Each successive generation of individuals born since World War II appears to have a higher incidence and earlier age of onset of both major depression and bipolar disorder. We began to notice higher rates and an earlier onset of mood disorders at the same time of escalating use of vegetable oils, which began in the 1960s and 1970s.

We already know that years of noshing on highly processed foods have saddled us with sky-high rates of heart disease, obesity, and related conditions. But, as we are starting to understand now, our eating habits may also be subtly altering our brain chemistry, leaving us vulnerable to anxiety disorders and depression. Only in this case, it is not just what we are eating—it is what we are not eating: foods containing omega-3 essential fatty acids--the `good fats` that help maintain optimal brain function. The American diet is almost devoid of Omega-3 Essential Fatty Acid. In fact, researchers believe that about 60% of Americans are deficient in Omega-3 fatty acids. The essential fatty acids are crucial for normal brain functioning since the brain is composed of more than 60% structural fat from these essential fatty acids.

Joseph Hibbeln, M.D., a psychiatrist at the National Institute of Health, thinks omega-3's might explain why the rate of depression is rising in the United States. A handful of small studies have suggested that omega-3 fatty acids can help smooth out the mood swings of depression and bipolar disorder. This research was conducted at Mass General Hospital and Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and McLean Hospital, a Harvard Medical School Affiliate. Harvard Psychiatrist, [Dr. Andrew Stoll's research in the treatment of Depression and Bipolar Disorder](#) proved that fish oils inhibit signal transduction in Bipolar Disorder similar to anticonvulsant medications.

A Purdue University study showed that kids low in Omega-3 essential fatty acids are significantly more likely to be hyperactive, have learning disorders, and to display behavioral problems. Omega-3 deficiencies have also been tied to dyslexia, violence, depression, memory problems, weight gain, cancer, heart disease, eczema, allergies, inflammatory diseases, arthritis, diabetes, and many other conditions.

Omega-3 Foods

1. **Fish** such as salmon, halibut, herring, mackerel, sturgeon, tuna, snapper and scallops
2. **Seeds and Nuts** such as flaxseed, pumpkin seed, Brazil nuts and walnuts
3. **Beans** such as Soybeans, navy beans or kidney beans
4. **Vegetables** such as winter and summer squash, broccoli, cauliflower, spinach, and kale
5. **Olive oil, wheat germ, tofu and free-range beef and poultry**

Fish oil supplement information websites:

www.consumerlab.com to check quality of brands in product tests (select a review)

www.omegabrite.com (Omegabrite was used in clinical studies at Mass. General Hospital)

www.bipolarchild.com Go to newsletters then THE A-Z's of OMEGA-3's article

HEALTH OBSERVANCES FOR 2011

March is Chronic Fatigue Syndrome Awareness Month

Information from the National Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Fibromyalgia Association:

CFS is marked by extreme fatigue that has lasted at least six months: is not the result of ongoing effort: is not substantially relieved by rest; and causes a substantial reduction in daily activities.

In addition to fatigue, CFS includes eight characteristic symptoms:

- Postexertional malaise (relapse of symptoms after physical or mental exertion)
- Unrefreshing sleep
- Substantial impairment in memory/concentration
- Muscle pain
- Pain in multiple joints
- Headaches of a new type, pattern or severity
- Sore throat
- Tender neck or armpit lymph nodes

Diagnosis of CFS

- There are no physical signs that identify CFS or diagnostic laboratory tests for CFS
- A physician or practitioner must carefully evaluate people who suffer the symptoms of CFS because many treatable medical and psychiatric conditions are hard to distinguish from CFS. Common conditions that should be ruled out through a careful medical history and appropriate testing includes mononucleosis, Lyme disease, thyroid conditions, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, various cancers, depression and bipolar disorder.

Research conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicates that less than 20% of CFS patients in this country have been diagnosed.

April is Autism Awareness Month

Information from the Autism Society

Autism is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life and affects a person's ability to communicate and interact with others.

Autism is treatable. Children do not "outgrow" autism, but studies show that early diagnosis and intervention lead to significantly improved outcomes.

Signs to look for in the children in your life:

- Lack of or delay in spoken language
- Repetitive use of language and/or motor mannerisms (e.g., hand-flapping, twirling objects)
- Little or no eye contact
- Lack of interest in peer relationships
- Lack of spontaneous or make-believe play
- Persistent fixation on parts of objects

May is Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month

Allergy Facts from Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

- Dust to control mites.
- Vacuum once or twice a week. Make sure your vacuum has an air filter to capture dust.
- Reduce pet dander. Keep pets out of the bedroom.
- Shut out pollen. Keep windows and doors closed. Use an air filter and clean it regularly.
- Avoid mold spores. Reduce the moisture in the bathroom and kitchen by fixing any leaks inside and outside of your home and clean moldy surfaces. Plants can carry pollen and mold, too, so limit the number of houseplants. Dehumidifiers will also help reduce mold.

This information is intended for your general knowledge only and is not a substitute for medical advice or treatment. Questions about any specific condition or patient should be referred to a licensed physician or practitioner.

Information provided by Sandra Gans, RN, Venice, FL.