
Focus on Health

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New Tests

There is now an alternative to sigmoidoscopy, colonoscopy, and virtual colonoscopy to screen for colon cancer. The test, called “Insure”, costs \$60. It is an immunochemical test for human hemoglobin in stool, and requires no special diet. The directions are simple and can be done by the patient at home and mailed directly to the lab. I now offer it to all patients over age 50, as I offer a blood test yearly (CA27.29) to screen for breast cancer rather than yearly mammography.

DHEA News

The adrenal hormone dehydroepiandrosterone (also known as DHEA) increases testosterone and estradiol levels in women, but only raises the estradiol in men. Both men and women who take DHEA lose abdominal fat, but women lose slightly more than men, 10% versus 7%. Insulin sensitivity improves dramatically as well. Other studies have shown that DHEA improves libido, muscle mass, and energy level in those older than age 70.

Harmful Cure?

Although cardiovascular disease is still the leading cause of death overall for people of any age in this country, cancer is now the leading cause of death prior to age 85. Chemotherapy and radiation, which is the standard treatment for metastatic cancer, may delay death, but is harmful to the body’s immune system and does not make sense as a way to cure metastatic disease.

Prevention

People who have atrial fibrillation can use both an anticoagulant such as Coumadin and an antiplatelet medication such as baby aspirin together for optimal protection against emboli with minimized risk of bleeding problems.

As part of the professional services I feel should be provided by me to my patients, screening of the voluminous medical literature has become more and more important. Please read this now if you have time before I see you, so that we can further discuss whichever topic especially interests you.

Perhaps you have seen an item that I have not included in this list or have not seen myself. If so, feel free to bring it to my attention.

Stuff to Know

Within 6-12 months of discontinuing hormone replacement, more than 96% of postmenopausal women will show altered vaginal pH, a marker for tissue change and its associated genital atrophy, leading to rapidly occurring dyspareunia (painful intercourse).

A society-wide reduction of hemoglobin A1C, a measure of blood sugar levels, of 0.1% has the potential to reduce the total U.S. mortality by up to 6%.

For patients whose LDL cholesterol levels are over 60, or C Reactive protein levels are over 2, the rate of recurrent cardiovascular adverse events (heart attack, stroke, aneurysm rupture) is more than double the rate of the average population.

Emergency contraception (also known as the “morning-after pill”) is not an abortifacient. It simply prevents conception by a combination of delaying ovulation and a local effect on the endometrium which prevents fertilization.

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