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HCQU Northwest

Pumpkin is My Favorite Season

It's that time of year...Pumpkin Season! Oh wait...I mean fall. It seems like over the last few years, pumpkin is everywhere. From candles to body sprays, pumpkin pie to pumpkin donuts, pumpkin coffee to the fan favorite PSL (pumpkin spice latte). Some people use them strictly for decorating, while others eat them. Pumpkin is much more than just a fall staple, though.

A pumpkin is a member of the gourd family and is related to squash, cucumber, and watermelon. Because of its origins from a seed-bearing part of a flowering plant, it is *technically* a fruit, but treated more like a vegetable. Both the flesh and seeds can be eaten and are often seasoned with cinnamon or nutmeg. Pumpkins come in many shapes, sizes, and colors. They can be found fresh in stores, at a local pumpkin patch, or even at a roadside stand from August to November. Canned pumpkin puree is available on the grocery store shelf year-round.

Pumpkins are a great source of beta carotene which is changed to Vitamin A in the body. It is essential for eye health, but also helps the immune, reproductive, and other vital bodily systems. Pumpkin can help aid in weight loss as it is low in calories and high in fiber. This hasn't been well researched, so don't put yourself on the pumpkin diet just yet. Pumpkins are a great source of potassium to help with bone density, maintaining a normal cardiac rhythm, and possibly preventing kidney stones. If you eat a lot of pumpkin, be mindful that too much potassium can cause arrhythmias. Pumpkin seeds can help raise HDL (good) cholesterol levels which can help with lowering blood pressure. Tryptophan, an amino acid found in pumpkin seeds, makes serotonin, which can improve mood and sleep patterns. Pumpkin is also a good source of iron, copper, and manganese.

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Pumpkin is My Favorite Season (continued)

Pumpkin extract can be applied directly to the skin as an oil or taken as a capsule. This can help fight signs of aging on the skin. The topical use has been shown to help with contact dermatitis linked to depression. Pumpkin oil can also help with eczema.

At just 30 calories a serving (1 cup of raw 1" cubes), pumpkin is a nice, healthy snack. If eating it raw, such as in a smoothie or on a salad, make sure to wash it thoroughly to eliminate bacteria. However, not many people like the taste of plain raw pumpkin and usually eat it in the form of pumpkin pie or rolls (or drink a pumpkin spice latte). Unfortunately, while tasting much better, they are then loaded with sugar and unhealthy. If prepared this way, limit the amount of pumpkin consumed. When purchasing canned pumpkin puree, be sure it is 100% pumpkin and doesn't contain any added salt or sugar for the highest nutritional value. Additionally, a person who has digestive issues (such as colitis or diverticulosis) and likes to eat pumpkin seeds may wish to shell them to prevent problems. If someone loves eating pumpkin but has kidney problems, they should check with their physician first.

Enjoy your pumpkin decorations, scents, and foods this fall!

Allison Gentz, RN

(<https://www.webmd.com/diet/health-benefits-pumpkin>)

Pumpkin seeds are rich in protein, fiber, vitamins, minerals, and polyunsaturated fats.

Roasted Pumpkin Seeds

When carving pumpkins this year, don't forget to save the seeds! They are so yummy when roasted and make the perfect snack.

Ingredients

1 cup raw pumpkin seeds

1 Tablespoon fine sea salt , plus more to taste

1 Tablespoon salted butter , melted

Instructions

In a pot of water, boil the pumpkin seeds and salt over high heat 15 minutes. Drain water and lay seeds evenly on paper towel-lined plates to dry.

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with foil or parchment paper for easy clean up.

In a medium bowl, toss together the seeds and butter until well coated. Sprinkle with extra salt or your favorite sea-salt, if desired. Spread seeds evenly on the baking sheet.

Bake 25 to 30 minutes, or until they're lightly toasted and golden brown. Stir every 10 minutes. If you like them more crispy, cook them longer. If you don't prefer the extra crunch, take them out a little sooner. Top with more salt, if desired.

Enjoy!





Holiday Depression

Signs, Causes, and Ways to Cope

As we are now approaching fall, the holiday season is just around the corner. The holidays are supposed to be a time that is filled with family, friends and lots of joy. This is not true for many. According to NAMI, 64% of people with a mental illness say that when the holidays are approaching it makes their mental health worse. Three in five Americans feel like the holidays negatively impact their mental health. Choosingtherapy.com stated that “280 million people in the world experience depression.” That’s 5% of the adult population.

As many as 14% of adults in the US experience “winter blues,” which may or may not coincide with the holidays. 69% of people feel stressed by either their “lack of time” or “lack of money” regarding the holidays. In addition, over half feel worried about the pressure to give or receive gifts. Risk factors contributing to these negative feelings can be attributed to loneliness, isolation, relationships, stress, illness, family history, personality, trauma and/or abuse, and substance abuse.

Holiday depression is not an actual diagnosis, but it is real, and it affects many people. Adding the extra stress from the holiday and the expectation to be happy could make people more depressed. Holiday stress can be temporary, but it can last for months, typically beginning near Thanksgiving and not ending until after the New Year.

Some people may exhibit physical signs that they are feeling the blues such as, headaches, stomach aches, trouble concentrating, unexplained aches and pains, fatigue and insomnia or hypersomnia. Others may show signs like over/under eating, sleeping too much or not enough, lower energy, self-loathing, reckless behaviors, feeling helpless/hopeless, and shifting moods.

The good news is, if you or someone you know is likely to experience the holiday blues, there are ways to treat and even prevent these feelings from taking over. Try one or more of the following. Don’t be a statistic.

May you have a wonderful holiday season!

| | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Set Realistic Expectations | Avoid Certain People | Make Time for Yourself | Travel |
| Seek Therapy | Create a New Tradition | Don’t Give into Pressure | Volunteer |
| Get Out | Exercise | Eat Healthy | Don’t Put All of Your Energy into Just One Day |

Happy Fall Everyone!

I hope everyone has had a wonderful summer and looking forward to pumpkins, cooler days and nights, and of course, the Holiday season!

We've been busy this summer providing in-person trainings throughout the region with two new trainings for our individuals. This includes the **Healthy Habits** program, which teaches how to be healthy in all aspects of life: Eat, Drink, Brush, Clean, Enjoy and Move. Our **CROWNS (Safety Series)** educates individuals on being safe in the Community, Residence, Online, Workplace, Natural Disasters, and Self. Here you can see the HCQU Staff in action.



We will continue to offer *one live training each month* throughout the Fall and winter. If you are interested in a specific topic, please send me an email. We are always looking for your feedback and any additional ways to help!

The HCQU has gone digital as well over the summer. You can now submit any Individual Review Requests or Technical Assistance/Individualized training requests right from our website. There is also an option to get a call back from a HCQU staff member if you have questions or need help.

As always, if you would like to set up any in person trainings or have questions regarding a training, feel free to email or call me at kfitzsimmons@milestonepa.org or 814-728-9400.

Krista

WEBINAR

Schedule

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| OCT 3 | Self Injury |
| NOV 7 | Copper Toxicity |
| DEC 5 | Kidney Disease |
| 7:30AM, 11AM AND 2PM | |

To Enroll: <http://northwesthcqu.learnupon.com>

For several decades now, we've been looking for ways to satisfy our craving for sweets without suffering the negative effects of sugar consumption. Phrases like "sugar-free" and "no calories" highlight many labels. Perhaps we should ask some questions about artificial sweeteners. First, do they really taste that good? Second, do they prevent us from gaining weight (or even help us lose weight)? Third, do they cause any health problems? The answers: 1) Apparently. 2) Maybe, maybe not. 3) Probably. Let's look at a few of these artificial sweeteners.

The best known, and maybe the most prevalent, of these substances, is Aspartame, otherwise known as NutraSweet. It is used in diet and "zero" soft drinks, sugar-free ice cream, light yogurt, reduced-calorie fruit juice, sugar-free chewing gum, sugarless candy, and several other food products (in fact, artificial sweeteners have been used in over 6,000 different food products, and aspartame is predominant in diet soda). Aspartame is advertised as "safe," yet in the world of diet soda drinkers, there have been reports of users experiencing headaches, brain fog, mood changes, seizures, MS-like symptoms, kidney problems, leaky gut, weight gain, diabetes and other metabolic problems, and tooth enamel erosion.

Other artificial sweeteners on the market today include Sucralose, Xylitol, Maltitol, Neotame, Saccharin, and Erythritol. All of them carry some risks. Recent studies have shown that Xylitol and Erythritol promote aggregation (clumping) of platelets in the bloodstream, thus increasing the risk of blood clots, strokes, and heart attacks. For those of you who were wondering, Stevia is a *natural* sweetener, and studies about any health risks are, so far, inconclusive.

Lest you think I am promoting sugar and its ugly cousin, high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS), I am not. Excessive consumption of either (especially the latter) can lead to weight gain, cancer, fatty liver disease, diabetes, hypertension, and leaky gut. Regular soda is probably the most notable product in this category, but most candy, snack foods, and baked goods are also loaded with sugar and/or HFCS.

So, what to eat and drink? First, check with your physician before making any dietary changes. For most of us, sticking to fresh fruits and vegetables, lean meats, whole grains, healthy oils (olive, coconut), nuts, and dairy (milk, cheese, eggs) will provide what our bodies need without the extra chemicals and sugar. Water is the best beverage, and you can flavor it with a slice of lemon, lime, orange, or cucumber.

In summary, we should limit our intake of artificial sweeteners (maybe as a weekly treat). Consuming them frequently and/or in large quantities may lead to health problems. There is almost always a price to pay for convenience. Read food labels. Do your homework. Talk with your doctor or nutritionist. Remember, whenever something seems too good to be true, it probably is.

Timothy A. Juliano, RN

Which is Healthier?



What Am I?

I can cause sleep loss, trouble concentrating, depression, and even suicidal ideation.

I become more common with age.

I range in intensity from mildly annoying to an "unbearable," "intractable, disabling condition."

Sometimes I am acute and sometimes I am chronic, depending on what is causing me.

There are over 50 known conditions that can cause me, including allergies, liver or kidney disease, parasites, diabetic neuropathy, Multiple Sclerosis, mercury poisoning, and insect bites.

I can also be the side effect of some medications.

I may have a psychological component, too - when you see someone else responding to me, you may start to feel me yourself.

All humans and animals experience me and do virtually the same thing to deal with me. Many people find it almost impossible to resist their response to me. In fact, recent research has shown that when people respond in the typical way, brain regions related to compulsions are activated, and brain regions linked to unpleasant thoughts and memories are "numbed."

Sometimes people's attempts to deal with me cause tissue damage, often referred to as "self-harm" or "self-injury."

I am not pain (although I bet that's what you're thinking!). For many years, researchers thought I worked the same way as pain in the nervous system. However, now that they are beginning to study me, they are learning how I am actually quite different from pain.

Have you guessed yet?

Here's your final clue: Doctors call me Pruritus. (answer at the bottom of pg.7)

Letter from the Director

With cooler weather approaching, I would like to take a moment to remind everyone about the extra risk of falling when winter weather brings the inevitable ice and snow. Roughly 1/3 of the population that we support has an increased fall risk as noted in the Health Risk Screening Tool data. Many times medications, unsafe footwear, medical issues, and hazards in and around our homes are the main risk factors for falling. When snow falls (yes it will happen) our chances of falling greatly increase.

We offer a training on Fall Prevention (along with many other topics) which educates staff or individuals, so if you would like this or other trainings just email Krista at kfitszsimmons@milestonepa.org to submit a request. We can do trainings virtually, in-person, or you can take classes online via our LMS at <https://northwesthcqu.learnupon.com/>. Please remember to stay safe when the temperature drops, and keep aware of weather changes in case severe weather is arriving. As always, I encourage you to get outside whenever possible to enjoy the fresh air, but if not outside try to find something indoors to keep you moving and to be healthier.

It is a great time of year to add apples to your diet, so warming up the house by making a fresh apple crisp or possibly apple dumplings should brighten your mood along with providing you an inside activity. Have a great day.

Darryl



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