

Some herb tea ingredients are dangerous

Q. Are herb teas better for a person than regular tea?

A. Packaged herb teas appear to be harmless, but the Food and Drug Administration warns that some herb teas may contain ingredients more dangerous than any ingredients found in coffee or regular tea. And these ingredients can cause adverse reactions if consumed in any quantity.

While herb teas have been around for thousands of years, they have never been tested to determine their therapeutic claims or safety when consumed in large quantities.

Three common ingredients in herb teas that have drawbacks:

1. Chamomile causes allergic reaction in individuals sensitive to ragweed or goldenrod.
2. Sassafras: a known carcinogen.
3. Nutmeg: can be toxic when brewed in large quantities.

By checking the ingredients label, you can avoid buying herb teas (or any products) that have ingredients you want to avoid.

Use herb teas in reasonable amounts to avoid possible reactions and don't use these teas for medicinal properties without medical approval.

Q. Can I eat eggs on a low-cholesterol diet?

A. A single egg contains all the cholesterol an average adult should consume in a day. However, all this cholesterol and fat (14 percent of this is polyunsaturated)—are all in the yolk. The egg white is free of



Terry Gibb

both fat and cholesterol and contains less than one-quarter of the calories in a whole large egg or about 21 calories.

Hard cooked, chopped egg whites still make a good garnish for salad

and vegetables. There are also many recipes that call only for egg whites.

Q. Can fasting cause permanent weight loss?

A. According to the School of Public Health at the University of California, Berkeley: "As part of a fast diet, fasting is usually ineffective." For a healthy person, a self-imposed, 24-hour fast usually causes no danger. But despite some claims, it won't cause permanent weight loss or "cleanse the body."

Prolonged fasting was introduced about 30 years ago as a medical

treatment for the severely obese.

Fasting will cause rapid initial weight loss, but most of this loss is fluid and mineral, rather than fat.

If the fast continues, body fat will decrease, but also lean body mass—muscle is lost. The body's energy production and rate of loss of fat and muscle decreases drastically if a fast continues beyond a certain point.

Few people who lose weight through fasting maintain the weight loss and some have sustained permanent injury from prolonged unsupervised fasting.

Q. Potato advertisements claim that potatoes are low-calorie. True or false?

A. True. A five-ounce baked potato (in the skin) has approximately 130 calories — about the same amount as the same weight serving of cottage cheese or tuna. It has 20 percent less calories than a serving of brown rice.

In addition, potatoes have no fat or cholesterol, are low in sodium high in fiber, vitamin C and potassium and are a good source of complex carbohydrates. Calories become a problem when you "add" to the po-

tato. Frying, salting, and covering them in butter, gravy or other sauces increases the calories, fat and cholesterol. For example, french fries have three times as many calories as a baked potato.

Most of the nutrients are found in the potato's skin. So it's best to eat the skin. When boiling potatoes, boil in the skin and then peel to retain the nutrients.

The Consumer Mailbag answers your questions. Address mail to The Consumer Mailbag, Concern Detroit, 1 Kennedy Square, 4th Floor, Detroit, 48226.

gerontology

A. Jolayne Farrell

Home is best place for elderly

Dear Jo: I read your column every week, and I couldn't agree more with your advice to the woman who was somewhat impatient with her mother's reluctance to go to a nursing home. You said, "It isn't easy being 95."

My mother, age 96, has been in an adult care home for over two years now and does not like it. Who would when one is surrounded by disabled adults in various stages of infirmity? I find it depressing just visiting, let alone living there.

My question is: Why does everyone get so excited when there is a so-called "breakthrough" in medical science that will enable people to live longer? What for? Longevity is wonderful when one can still function and be in one's own home. Otherwise, in my opinion, it's the pits. A visit to any nursing home is clear evidence of this fact.

Thanks for hearing me out. I enjoy your column.

Mrs. F. C., Ann Arbor

Dear Mrs. C.:

Thank you for your letter. Although short, it certainly touched on some issues.

When living in this "youth oriented" society so few of us stop to think what it's really like to be 75, 85 — even 95. Frankly, when answering the letter you refer to, written by a woman my age, my first inclination was to sympathize with the daughter.

But then I spent some time trying to see the world through the eyes and thoughts of the woman who was about to be "placed" (with good intentions by her daughter) in a nursing home.

It was revealing to contemplate what the 95-year-old was going to have to give up. And it seemed she had no say in the matter.

Your description of nursing homes was a little grim — and not all of them are that bad. Many dedicated (and underpaid) people work in them.

As for the major "breakthroughs" in medical science, they are aimed at decreasing or eliminating pain and suffering. The desire of modern medical science is not prolonging life for its own sake, but to improve the quality of life.

Lastly, your thoughts on remaining able to function and staying in one's own home reflects the major goals of all health care professionals. In the future, considering the current demographics, most older people will reside in their own homes for several reasons.

• First, that is where they will want to live; second, it is where they belong; third, society will demand more home care assistance. With the increased number of older citizens institutional care for all will be too expensive.

• It was a pleasure "hearing you out." Keep in touch.

Readers can write to Jolayne Farrell at 11 Cynthia Crescent, Richmond Hill, Ontario L4B 1J3.

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