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LIVE WELL WORK WELL

Health and wellness tips for your work and life—brought to you by the insurance professionals at

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In Defense of Coffee

Coffee has an unfortunate reputation for causing many health problems—from stunting your growth to claims that it causes heart disease and cancer. But, recent research indicates that coffee may not be so bad after all. For most people, the health benefits actually outweigh the risks.

Why the change of heart? Earlier studies didn't always take into account that high-risk behaviors, such as smoking and physical inactivity, tend to be more common among heavy coffee drinkers. If you take those unhealthy habits out of the equation, there is actually a healthy relationship between coffee consumption and decreased overall mortality.

Furthermore, that cup of coffee could actually protect against Parkinson's disease, type 2 diabetes and liver disease—including liver cancer. It also appears to improve cognitive function and decrease the risk of depression.

There are exceptions, though. Drinking too much unfiltered coffee may cause elevated cholesterol levels. Plus, some people have difficulty metabolizing coffee and could be at higher risk for heart disease as a result.

Although coffee may have fewer risks than benefits, keep in mind that other beverages, such as milk and some fruit juices, contain nutrients that coffee does not. Also, adding cream and sugar to your coffee adds more fat and calories.

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Sugar Substitutes

Because there are so many sugar substitutes on the market, it can be difficult to decide on the best one for your lifestyle. This decision is especially important for the millions of people who live with diabetes. The following is a list of some of the most common artificial sweeteners and how they affect your blood sugar levels:

1. **Agave Nectar –** Agave nectar is a concentrated sugar syrup that is a vegan alternative to honey. Although it has twice as many calories as table sugar, it has a lower glycemic index, meaning that it is safer in moderation for people living with diabetes. And, being 1.5 times sweeter than table sugar, people tend to use less of it. Still, the American Diabetes Association lists agave nectar as “a sweetener to limit.”

2. **Aspartame –** Aspartame is produced by linking aspartic acid and phenylalanine, two amino acids. It’s known by its brand names, Equal and NutraSweet. It can be found in soft drinks, dairy, candy, fruit spreads and various other foods. It is also available in packets that can be added to coffee and tea. Aspartame is 200 times sweeter than sugar and is acceptable for people with diabetes since it has no effect on blood glucose levels.

3. **Stevia –** Derived from the South American stevia plant, its brand names include PureVia, Truvia and SweetLeaf Sweetener. It can be found in drinks, desserts, gum, baked goods, candy, yogurt and in packets for use in beverages. Stevia is up to 300 times sweeter than sugar and does not affect blood sugar levels, so it is safe for people who have diabetes.

4. **Sucralose (Splenda) –** Sucralose, or Splenda, is a no-calorie sugar substitute found in many processed foods and used as a general purpose sweetener (found in small yellow packets wherever coffee and tea are served). Splenda is 600 times sweeter than refined sugar and not very safe for individuals with diabetes, due to its carbohydrate content. According to research, Splenda contains about 1 gram of carbs per teaspoon, which means it could affect blood sugar if it’s not consumed in moderation. People who have diabetes should limit their intake of Splenda.

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30-Minute Chili

This recipe is quick, easy, inexpensive, healthy and delicious—especially on cold winter nights.

- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 cups light red kidney beans, cooked
- 1 can tomato soup (no water added)
- 1 Tbsp. chili powder, or to taste
- 10 drops hot pepper sauce, or to taste

Directions

In a large skillet, cook the meat for about 10 to 15 minutes or until brown.

Drain the meat, add the onion, and cook for five minutes.

Add the kidney beans, soup and chili powder and heat for five minutes or until hot. If using hot pepper sauce, add the sauce then, too.

Serve alone or on top of whole wheat pasta or rice.

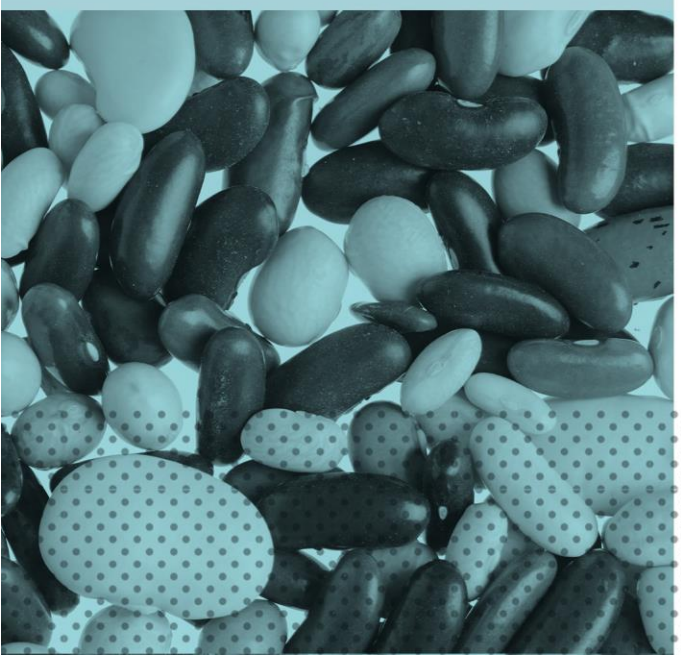
Makes: 6 servings

Nutritional Information (per serving)

Total Calories	310
Total Fat	10 g
Protein	28 g
Carbohydrates	26 g
Dietary Fiber	5 g
Saturated Fat	4 g
Sodium	350 mg

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

Source: USDA



New Year's Resolutions

According to research, only 8 percent of the people who make New Year's resolutions actually achieve them. This could be due to people setting unrealistic goals or setting no goals at all. If you want to make a resolution in the New Year and actually stick to it, consider setting a "SMART" goal—one that is **s**pecific, **m**easurable, **a**ttainable, **r**ealistic and **t**imely.

For example, let's say that your goal is that you would like to take three CrossFit classes per week for 60 days. If you achieve your goal at the end of that 60-day period, you should reward yourself with something worthwhile. Then, keep your original goal going with consecutive SMART goals after you complete each one. Remember that when you set your SMART goal, you should determine your reward then, as well. That way, when you're five weeks in and tempted to throw in the towel, you can set your sights on that specific reward and remind yourself how close you are to getting it.

How to Make and Keep Your New Year's Resolutions

S-Be **specific.** Specific resolutions make them more concrete and exciting. General resolutions are static and often lack inspiration.

M-Make them **measurable.** Determine benchmarks against which you can determine progress. Without measurable benchmarks, you can't gauge progress and may not feel motivated to continue.

A-Make them **attainable.** Choose resolutions that are important to you and actually inspire you to take action.

R-Be **realistic.** You must be willing and able to work toward something concrete. Set yourself up for success with a resolution that you are realistically able to achieve.

T-Be **timely.** Identify a solid start and finish. Without that, you will have no sense of urgency to accomplish your goal.