Quick 'n Easy Quiz

The Bottom Line

By Bonnie Liebman

Articles in *Nutrition Action Healthletter* take an in-depth look at the latest on diet and disease. But what if you just don't have time to read what researchers are finding or thinking?

This tough quiz helps you cut to the chase. Some questions (those that begin with "All but one...") may sound confusing. But the choices tell you four ways (not just one) to, say, lower your risk of stroke.

1. **To burn off the 450 calories in a Panera muffin, a typical 150 lb. person would have to walk briskly for roughly how long?**
   a. 1/2 hour
   b. 1 hour
   c. 1 1/2 hours
   d. 2 hours

2. **Which is least likely to protect your memory?**
   a. take ginkgo biloba
   b. lose excess weight
   c. exercise at least 30 minutes a day
   d. keep your blood pressure under control
   e. stay mentally and socially engaged

3. **Which of these Italian restaurant dishes typically has the fewest calories?**
   a. spaghetti & meatballs
   b. lasagna
   c. eggplant parmesan
   d. chicken parmesan
   e. cheese ravioli

4. **All but one of these may lower your risk of stroke. Which one won't?**
   a. keep a lid on blood pressure
   b. eat 8 to 10 fruits and vegetables a day
   c. cut back on salt
   d. take B vitamins
   e. lose extra weight

5. **Which is most likely to lower breast cancer risk?**
   a. eat more fruits and vegetables
   b. eat more soy foods
   c. lose (or don't gain) excess weight
   d. take vitamin D
   e. eat less red meat

6. **Coffee drinkers have a lower risk of all but one of these conditions. Which one?**
   a. Parkinson's disease
   b. arthritis
   c. kidney stones
   d. type 2 diabetes
   e. gout

7. **Which of these desserts typically has the fewest calories?**
   a. brownie sundae
   b. plain cheesecake
   c. apple crisp a la mode
   d. tiramisu
   e. chocolate lava cake

8. **Cutting back on salt may lower your risk of all but one of these. Which one?**
   a. kidney disease
   b. stiff arteries
   c. colon cancer
   d. enlarged heart
   e. osteoporosis

9. **What's the best way to avoid catching a cold?**
   a. take vitamin C
   b. take Airborne
   c. take echinacea
   d. don't share food
   e. keep your hands clean

10. **All but one of these can keep arteries from stiffening as you age. Which one doesn't?**
    a. lose excess weight
    b. cut back on salt
    c. limit saturated fat
    d. take folic acid supplements
    e. eat potassium-rich foods

11. **Which may lower your risk of osteoarthritis?**
    a. lose (or don't gain) excess weight
    b. limit strength training
    c. eat less salt
    d. limit alcohol

12. **Which is least likely to have pesticide residues?**
    a. strawberries
    b. bell peppers
    c. broccoli
    d. spinach
    e. apples

13. **All but one of these may lower your risk of diabetes. Which one?**
    a. drink water instead of soda or juice
    b. take vitamin E
    c. replace refined grains and sweets with whole grains
    d. watch your weight
    e. get at least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise a day

14. **Since 1970, U.S. cheese consumption has:**
    a. dropped by 50 percent
    b. dropped by 25 percent
    c. stayed the same
    d. doubled
    e. tripled

15. **Consuming all but one of these may help keep you regular. Which one probably won't help?**
    a. wheat bran
    b. prunes
    d. psyllium
    d. salad
    e. coffee

16. **Which of these Chinese restaurant dishes typically has the most calories?**
    a. beef & broccoli
    b. eggplant in garlic sauce
    c. mu shu pork
    d. General Tso's chicken
    e. combination lo mein

17. **Which may protect the prostate?**
    a. take selenium
    b. take vitamin D
    c. take vitamin E
    d. take zinc
    e. lose (or don't gain) excess weight

18. **What's the best way to prevent wrinkles?**
    a. avoid sugar
    b. take high doses of vitamin E
    c. stay out of the sun
    d. drink green tea
    e. take fish oil supplements

19. **Excess pounds raise the risk of all but one of these cancers. Which one?**
    a. colon
    b. brain
    c. kidney
    d. pancreatic
    e. esophageal

20. **Getting too little sleep can do all but one of these. Which one?**
    a. lead to bone loss
    b. make dieters lose less fat and more muscle
    c. make cells resistant to insulin
    d. make you hungrier

21. **Soy foods can help prevent or treat which of these?**
    a. breast cancer
    b. high cholesterol
    c. memory loss
    d. osteoporosis
    e. hot flashes

22. **We're eating more now than in 1970 of all but one of these. Which one?**
    a. beef
    b. flour
    c. cooking and salad oils
    d. sugar and corn syrup

23. **Which may lower your risk of kidney stones?**
    a. drink more grapefruit juice
    b. take vitamin C
    c. cut back on calcium-rich foods
    d. eat more fruits and vegetables

24. **Red meat may raise the risk of all but one of these. Which one?**
    a. arthritis
    b. pancreatic cancer
    c. heart disease
    d. colon cancer
    e. global warming

Answers

1. **c (1 1/2 hours).** You could also jog for an hour or swim laps, bicycle, or work on a stair machine for 45 minutes. So think twice before you bite.

2. **a (take ginkgo biloba).** Ginkgo has failed to boost memory in most studies. In the latest, 1,500 people aged 72 to 96 who took 240 milligrams of ginkgo every day for six years had no better memory, attention, or any other measure of thinking ability than 1,500 similar people who took a placebo.

   On the other hand, people who exercise, avoid weight gain in middle age, keep their blood pressure under control, and stay mentally and socially engaged appear to score better on memory tests as they age. Although that's not proof, there are plenty of other reasons to take those steps.

3. **e (cheese ravioli).** Cheese ravioli has about 650 calories if it's topped with marinara sauce. Meat or cream sauce ups the calories. Lasagna has roughly 850 calories, while chicken or eggplant parmesan (with a side of spaghetti) and spaghetti & meatballs climb to about 1,000 calories each. Pastas with cream-and-cheese sauces like Alfredo or carbonara typically reach 1,200 to 1,500 calories.

4. **d (take B vitamins).** Lowering salt is critical. Trimming excess weight and boosting fruits and vegetables also lower blood pressure. Exercise may also help, but high doses of B vitamins (like B-6, B-12, and folic acid) don't.

5. **c (lose—or don't gain—excess weight).** You can also lower your risk by getting more exercise and limiting alcohol.

6. **b (arthritis).** People who drink either regular or decaf coffee have a lower risk of type 2 diabetes, gout, and kidney stones. Lower Parkinson's risk is linked only to regular coffee. A small number of studies also find that people who consume more caffeine have a lower risk of Alzheimer's and other types of cognitive decline.

7. **d (tiramisu).** Tiramisu typically has about 500 calories. And that's low compared to most popular desserts served at chain restaurants. Apple crisp a la mode and plain cheesecake hit 750 calories, while a chocolate lava cake or brownie sundae clocks in at 1,000 calories or more.

8. **c (colon cancer).** Excess salt may harm the kidney, increase calcium losses, and make arteries less flexible. (Stiff arteries are often an early sign of heart disease.) Too much sodium can also cause left ventricular hypertrophy—a thickening of the walls of the heart's main pump (the left ventricle) that can result in an enlarged heart. But the strongest reason to eat less salt is to lower your blood pressure.

9. **e (keep your hands clean).** Sharing food is unlikely to spread colds because the virus needs to go from your hands to your eyes or nose. So wash your hands frequently. Taking high doses of vitamin C (1,000 mg a day) before and while you have a cold may shorten the duration by half a day or so, but there's no good evidence that vitamin C, products like Airborne, or echinacea can *prevent* colds.

10. **d (take folic acid supplements).** Stiff arteries can raise your risk of high blood pressure, heart attack, and cognitive decline. There's no good evidence that folic acid supplements keep arteries supple.

11. **a (lose—or don't gain—excess weight).** Less weight takes a load off your joints. Strength training may curb joint pain by strengthening the muscles around the joints. Walking, dancing, biking, or other aerobic exercise may also help because it revitalizes the cartilage and synovial fluid in your joints.

12. **c (broccoli).** Other "consistently clean" produce: onions, avocados, frozen corn, frozen peas, pineapples, mangoes, asparagus, kiwi, bananas, cabbage and papayas. On the other hand, apples, bell

peppers, spinach, and strawberries are members of the "dirty dozen," along with peaches, celery, nectarines, cherries, pears, imported grapes, lettuce, and potatoes. You can dodge the pesticides by buying organic.

13. **b (take vitamin E).** Losing (or not gaining) excess weight is by far the most crucial step you can take to keep type 2 diabetes at bay. Exercise should also help, even if it doesn't lead to weight loss. Regular soft drinks, refined grains, sweets, and even fruit juice may raise your risk by boosting blood sugar levels.

14. **e (tripled).** The increase is mostly due to the cheddar and mozzarella that show up on pizza, burgers, steaks, salads, chicken, fries, nachos, sandwiches...and our waist-lines and arteries.

15. **d (salad).** A typical salad of greens, tomato, cucumber, etc., doesn't have much fiber (unless you add beans). Activia yogurt can help keep some people regular, but there's no good evidence that other brands (like Yo-Plus) have the same effect.

16. **d (General Tso's chicken).** General Tso's chicken usually has around 1,300 calories. Expect about 1,000 calories in tofu & mixed vegetables, eggplant in garlic sauce, combination lo mein, beef & broccoli, or mu shu pork. Orange (crispy) beef and kung pao chicken hover around 1,500 calories. Only a handful of dishes—like Buddha's Delight, shrimp with lobster sauce, moo goo gai pan, and Szechwan string beans—typically get the calories down to around 500. And don't forget to add 200 calories for every *cup* of rice you eat.

17. **e (lose—or don't gain—excess weight).** Obesity may raise the risk of *fatal* prostate cancer. Selenium, vitamin E, vitamin D, and zinc don't help. In fact, men who took high doses of zinc (80 mg a day) were more likely to be hospitalized for genitourinary problems like benign enlarged prostate, urinary tract infections, kidney stone, or kidney failure.

18. **c (stay out of the sun).** The sun's ultraviolet rays are the chief cause of wrinkles. There's no clear evidence that green tea's polyphenols help or that sugary foods hurt. High doses of vitamin E (1,000 to 2,000 IU a day) or fish oil (3,000 to 4,000 mg a day) delay skin reddening in the laboratory. Whether that translates into fewer wrinkles isn't clear, and such high doses of vitamin E may not be safe.

19. **b (brain).** Excess weight also promotes cancers of the uterus and breast, as well as fatal prostate cancer.

20. **a (lead to bone loss).** In a recent (though small) study, people lost more muscle than fat when they got too little sleep (less than six hours a night) while they were dieting. Sleep deprivation also makes you hungrier, especially for high-carbohydrate foods. And lack of sleep may make your body respond poorly to insulin.

21. **b (high cholesterol).** Twenty-five grams a day of soy protein—around four cups of soy milk or 15 oz. of firm tofu—can lower LDL ("bad") cholesterol by about 3 percent. Of course, LDL also drops if you eat soy in place of red meat or cheese, but that's because you're eating unsaturated soy fat instead of saturated meat and dairy fat. So far, soy has struck out on other counts.

22. **a (beef).** Many people think that America has been on a low-fat diet for 40 years. Not true. Since 1970, when the obesity epidemic began, oils have more than tripled, flour has gone up by 25 percent, and sweeteners have risen by 14 percent. Beef has dropped by 22 percent, but we've made up the difference by eating more than twice as much chicken as we did in 1970.

23. d (eat more fruits and vegetables). Fruits and vegetables are rich in citrates, which help prevent calcium oxalate stones (the most common type). In general, drinking more fluids helps. Coffee and citrus juices are especially good, with one exception: people who drink grapefruit juice have a higher risk of kidney stones. Taking high doses of vitamin C (1,000 to 2,000 mg a day) can also increase risk. Ditto for high doses of calcium (1,000 mg a day) if you're already getting about 1,000 mg a day from food.

24. a (arthritis). Red meat's saturated fat explains its link to heart disease. Researchers aren't sure why red meat (beef and pork) appears to raise the risk of colon and pancreatic cancer. Livestock accounts for 18 percent of global green-house gas emissions—more than transportation.

How'd You Do?

Get about half of the questions wrong? Don't worry. So did most of the people we tried the test on. Look at it this way: had you aced the test, you wouldn't have learned anything.

21-24: You're a superstar. Looking for a job?

16-20: An "A" on our curve. Can we call you with questions?

11-15: Hang in there. Most people scored in this range.

1-10: Oops. Stop wrapping your fish in *Nutrition Action*.