

SHORT SUBJECTS

from recent medical news and research

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May 2026

DIARRHEA

A diarrheal illness was making the rounds in April. While symptoms were self-limited, it caused misery. I often recommend Pepto Bismol for acute diarrhea, which can provide a simple cure without a doctor's visit or prescription: It fights both bacterial and viral intestinal infections, including those arising from eating contaminated food. Taking *Imodium* or *Kayopectate* are not advised, as they keep the infection inside. If there is fever, do a test for COVID. If diarrhea is severe or accompanied by vomiting, inhibiting the ability to stay hydrated by drinking fluids, the best course of action is an urgent care or emergency department visit to receive intravenous fluids, to prevent kidney failure from dehydration. If able to keep down fluids and a little solid food, the BRATT diet of banana, rice, applesauce, tea and toast (dry), is likely to be best tolerated. Pepto Bismol, especially if taken frequently over a period of days, will turn the stool black. If diarrhea is initially bloody with blood mixed in the stool, seek medical attention.

The FDA has approved a higher injectable 7.2 mg dose of the **GLP-1 agonist** weight loss medication semaglutide for weekly administration.

CANCER (from the Greek *karkinos*, the word for an aggressive crab):

Scans before age 30: A recent investigation of radiological imaging of children and adolescents showed that those who had undergone multiple x-rays and scans (with cumulative excess radiation exposure of bone marrow-containing body parts {sternum, hips, lumbar spine and pelvis}) had a small but statistically significant augmented risk of subsequent hematological cancers (lymphomas and leukemias) by age 25 years. This does not mean that parents should forego necessary imaging on the

outside chance that a cancer will appear in the next ten or fifteen years. Or that parents should feel guilty about cancer appearing at a young age, blaming it on that arm x-ray at age 7. Some viral infections, types of air and water pollution and micro and nano plastics exposures also cause cancers. We do not live in a pristine environment without risk and because there are so many possible cancer etiologies, it would be hard to definitively attribute a specific cancer to any specific cause, except for those caused by certain viruses,

Colon cancer before age 55: Colon cancer rates are skyrocketing in adults under age fifty-five, attributed to low-fiber Western diets, obesity, sedentary lifestyles, and antibiotic usage that changes colonic bacterial composition. Those who consume both/either/or soluble (the glue-y stuff of oatmeal) and insoluble (the stringy stuff in vegetables) fiber tend to incur less colon cancer.

As little as two alcoholic drinks per day increases cancer risk, causing it to now be labeled a Group 1 human carcinogen.

Mortality: The American Cancer Society reports that the cancer mortality gap has widened, with the highest rates having shifted from urban to rural communities... possibly from more poverty, lifestyle changes or less access to care.

MENOPAUSAL HORMONE THERAPY: The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is reviewing the black box warning on post-menopausal hormone therapy, slicing and dicing subgroups of the Women's Health Initiative (WHI) studies to find those who might safely take estradiol or the novel drug, *elinzanetant*, to reduce menopausal symptoms. In the early 2000's, U.S. doctors jumped on the Women's Health Initiative (WHI) fear and misinformation bandwagon to induce a national hot flash by stopping hormone replacement treatment (HRT) of menopausal women. The WHI

group found a **non-significant** increase of new breast cancers in the women who took a now out-of-date hormone combination. Though the FDA has removed the blanket Black box prohibition, it has continued the recommendation against estrogen therapy in women who still have a uterus, who are thereby at risk for endometrial cancer. Enabling estrogen resumption might improve heart, bone and brain health, as well as reduce the unpleasant menopausal symptoms of hot flashes, insomnia and night sweats. Estrogen-containing HRT remains contraindicated for women carrying the BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutations.

Speaking of **BRCA1 and BRCA2 mutations**, a common misconception is that these genetic mutations, which impair cells' capacity to repair dangerous, cancer-causing DNA mutations, predispose only to breast and ovarian cancers. Wrong: Persons with these mutations have had more than thirty different cancer types, most notably cervical, pancreas and prostate cancers and melanoma.

RISING DRUG COSTS: Though a 1994 international agreement eliminated tariffs on pharmaceuticals, President Donald Trump's April 2025 uniform tariffs included pharmaceuticals after a brief exemption period, ostensibly to protect national security under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962. He opened an investigation of generic medications' supply chains from other nations, particularly China and India, which produce many of our generics. When no security threat was found, he revoked tariffs on generic drugs but imposed 100% tariffs on name-brand drugs. If you wonder why your medication costs have sky-rocketed, you now know at least one reason. Another is the price hikes pharmaceutical companies imposed on 350 medications, despite the President's urging them to lower costs.

RECENT NUTRITION STUDIES

1. Consuming an unprocessed, whole foods diet on average decreases calorie intake by about five hundred calories. That could mean a vegetarian, pescetarian or omnivorous diet, or any combination

thereof that omits refined crackers and other grain products, many popular cereals and Twinkies.

2. **Anthocyanin:** In a study of persons with pre-diabetes, those who took an anthocyanin supplement had improved pancreatic cell function, thereby improving glucose control, suggesting that a regular diet that includes foods rich in anthocyanins (eggplant, red and purple berries, red cabbage, purple broccoli, cauliflower and carrots, black currants, plums and black rice) might also prevent diabetes in at-risk individuals.

3. **Dietary fiber and fiber supplements** like Metamucil and psyllium, especially the "roughage" type in vegetables, nuts and fruit peels, increase bowel movement frequency in people with normal bowel function. In those with chronic constipation, however, rather than solving the problem, added fiber just adds to stool bulk stuck in the colon.

EDUCATION OFFER: I am available to do medicine and nutrition games and/or talks to groups or school classes about nutrition or medical subjects: Please respond to this email to contact me about your group or school and the subject which you would like to address. I do not drive, so if you are more than 5 miles from central Sacramento and not reachable by public transportation, I would need you to make travel arrangements.