



December, 2015



'Tis the season to be merry, but are we? Caregivers are stressed and this adds more work for the body, such as your heart has to work harder, bones become more brittle, and your brain gets a little less efficient. A good diet can help with this stress, especially if you are eating the right foods.

A study in Sweden used 71,000 adults, ages 45 to 83, over a 13-year period that showed people who didn't eat fruits or vegetables died an average of three years sooner than those who ate lots of apples, carrots, and tomatoes. Just one serving a day has health benefits, but eating five servings is optimal. Why is this? Fruits and vegetables are loaded with a variety of vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals which help reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers. They're low in calories, have lots of fiber to aid in digestion, and no added fat. Wow! Let's eat those fruits and veggies!

We've been hearing for years that **saturated fat is not good for your heart**, but a new small study suggests that it's also bad for your brain. Researchers have found that diets high in saturated fat cut the body's level of a key chemical that helps protect against Alzheimer's disease. It requires more research but it sounds very plausible. Saturated fats are found in beef, butter, and ice cream, as well as baked goods and fried foods.

Use fat-free or low-fat dairy. The calcium and vitamin D content are the same, without the extra fat. Bones tend to shrink in size and density with age, which makes them more susceptible to fracture. Milk, yogurt, and cheese are high in calcium. Some dark, leafy green vegetables, such as broccoli and kale, contain calcium as well as canned salmon with bones. Some fruit juices and cereals are fortified with calcium, so there are lots of ways to gain calcium in your diet. Reprinted from *Nuggets of Hope*, December 2011.





P.M.S.

Caregivers need to take care of themselves **P**hysically, **M**entally, and **S**piritually. Because caregivers are so focused on their loved ones, they do not recognize that their emotional and self-care needs are suffering. We just read about how to take care of yourself **P**hysically. Those fruits and veggies also help your brain, but what are other ways we can take care of ourselves **M**entally?

Join a support group, learn ways to manage stress, learn new caregiving skills as the disease progresses, and know what resources are available. When people offer to help, let them. Sometimes we feel that we can do it all, or we get so involved with the day-to-day schedule that we block out anyone and anything from allowing us to think of how to get some extra help. It's not being weak to have others help you; it's being very wise. You must take care of yourself or you won't be able to take care of your loved one(s).

Caregivers need to take care of themselves **S**piritually. We all need a higher power to cling to. For me it's being a Christian. The Bible is my security blanket, relevant today as much as it was hundreds of years ago. My faith is what I cling to during the difficult times, and I've had many!

*The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.
And those who know Your name put their trust in You,
For You, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you. – Psalm 9:9-10*



Coping with the Holidays – Stress Busters

It's important to be aware of our emotions and find the stress busters that work for you. Here are some examples:

- ❖ Count to 10
- ❖ Slow deep breathing
- ❖ Walking
- ❖ Stretching
- ❖ Journaling
- ❖ Have a good cry. Tears rid the body of chemicals that build up during stress.
- ❖ Talk it out.
- ❖ Yell into a pillow
- ❖ Snack on almonds, crisp veggies, or dark chocolate in moderation
- ❖ Humor – Laughter produces endorphins, our natural stress fighters



Recipe Corner

Holiday cooking is always a cookie-baking time. Memories of making cookies with my mom are precious memories. Two favorites are below.

Mom's Date Bars

Filling: Mix in saucepan: 3 cups cut-up dates, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups water. Cook over low heat until thick (about 10 min.). Cool and spread on crust.

Crust: Mix together $\frac{3}{4}$ cup butter and 1 cup brown sugar. Stir in 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups flour, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. soda, 1 tsp. salt and 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups quick oats. Place half in 9 x 13 in. greased pan. Press and flatten. Spread with cooled filling. Cover with remaining crumbs.

Bake at 400 for 15 minutes. Cool before cutting into squares.

Crystal's Meatballs

Recently my daughter made these yummy appetizer meatballs for a gathering. They were so good and what we liked about them was that they were gluten-free and low in fat.

1 lb. ground chicken, turkey, or beef
2 cups shredded zucchini
2-3 green onions, sliced
1 clove garlic, minced
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. oregano
1 tsp. basil
1 tsp. dried rosemary
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. black pepper
3-4 TB. fresh cilantro, minced
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup grated parmesan cheese

Mix together well. Form into balls (walnut-sized) and place on cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Bake 350 until brown and well-cooked in centers. Serve with guacamole, if desired.



Choose JOY

Our **JOY-spirations for Caregivers** has been a favorite book with family caregivers. The book helps with the emotional and spiritual stress of the caregiver giving encouragement and hope. If you know someone who would benefit from this book, order at www.karenboerger.com for \$14.99 OR 2/\$20. My website is ready now to take your credit card orders.



Meditation

*Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!
Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into His presence with singing!
Know that the Lord, He is God!
It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.
Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise!
Give thanks to him; bless His Name!
For the Lord is good; His steadfast love endures forever,
And His faithfulness to all generations.*
--Psalm 100

Dear God, You are *my* caregiver. Sometimes I get so overwhelmed with the daily challenges that I forget to acknowledge You as the one who loves and cares for me. I can relate to Paul because I do the things I don't want to do, and what I want to do—totally focus on You—I don't do. What a relief to know that You will never stop loving me even when I lose my focus and forget that You are the source of my strength. What an inexpressible joy I feel knowing that I will never be helpless as Your child. Your love for me is everlasting. I never have to give up hope. It is with wondrous joy that I praise You for being my caregiver. In Your name, Amen.

(taken from Dellinger and Boerger, Blessings and Prayers for Caregivers, CPH, p. 43)