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Welcome to the December issue of the

YOUrology Update!

Winter is here and the holiday season is in full swing! And with the holidays come the guests that you probably don't see the rest of the year. Are you ready?

For most people, this is also the busiest time of year, but your family doesn't have to suffer at the dinner table. You can still prepare delicious meals while you're out running errands. We're sharing a recipe for some savory pork chops that you just put in your slow cooker and forget until you come home to the amazing smell.

We're also sharing some of our ideas for helping families make Christmas more meaningful for their children and some little-known Christmas fun facts. On the health side, we're including some interesting information about breast cancer in men that may surprise you. We're also sharing some information about testosterone and its connection to heart disease in men.

Thank you for being among those whom we consider to be not only our patients, but our friends. We hope your holiday season is filled with many, many moments to treasure.

- Dr. Shahram Shawn Gholami

“Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire... it is the time for home.”

~ Edith Sitwell

Breast Cancer: Not Just a Problem for Women

Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers in women. However, men are not immune to this problem although it is far more common in women. Many people do not realize that men have breast tissue and that they can develop breast cancer. Breast cancer is about 100 times less common among men than among women.

The prognosis (outlook) for men with breast cancer was once thought to be worse than that for women, but recent studies have not found this to be true. In fact, men and women with the same stage of breast cancer have a fairly similar outlook for survival.

The most obvious difference between the male and female breast is size. Because men have very little breast tissue, it is easier for men and their health care professionals to feel small masses (tumors). On the other hand, because men have so little breast tissue, cancers do not need to grow very far to reach the nipple, the skin covering the breast, or the muscles underneath the breast. So even though breast cancers in men tend to be slightly smaller than in women when they are first found, they have more often already spread to nearby tissues or lymph nodes. The extent of spread is one of the most important factors in the prognosis of a breast cancer.

Another difference is that breast cancer is common among women and rare among men. Women tend to be aware of this disease and its possible warning signs. Women perform self-exams on a regular basis and also obtain mammograms every year.

However, most men do not realize they have even a small risk of being affected.

Some men ignore breast lumps or think they are caused by an infection or some other reason, and they do not get medical treatment until the mass has had a chance to grow. Because breast cancer is so uncommon in men, there is unlikely to be any benefit in screening men in the general population for breast cancer.



Treatment

Most of the information about treating male breast cancer comes from doctors' experience with treating female breast cancer. Because so few men have breast cancer, it's hard for doctors to study the treatment of male breast cancer patients separately in clinical trials. Local therapy is intended to treat a tumor at the site without affecting the rest of the body. Surgery and radiation therapy are examples of local therapies. Systemic therapy refers to drugs, which can be given by mouth or directly into the bloodstream to reach cancer cells anywhere in the body. Chemotherapy, hormone therapy, and targeted therapy are systemic therapies.

Bottom Line: Breast cancer can occur in men as well as women. While not as common in men as in women, men need to know that any lumps, swelling or discharge from the nipple should be examined by a physician.

Slow Cooker Pork Chops

with Apple-Cherry Stuffing



Ingredients

- 1 package (6 ounces) Betty Crocker® Homestyle Stuffing turkey flavor
- 2 medium celery stalks, chopped (1 cup)
- 1 medium tart cooking apple, peeled and chopped (1 cup)
- 1 medium onion, chopped (1/2 cup)
- 1 cup dried cherries
- 1/4 cup butter or margarine, melted
- 1 cup Progresso® chicken broth (from 32-ounce carton)
- 6 pork boneless loin chops, about 1/2 inch thick

Spray inside of 4- to 5-quart slow cooker with cooking spray.

Mix all ingredients together except pork.

Place half of the stuffing mixture in slow cooker; top with pork. Spoon remaining stuffing mixture over pork.

Cover and cook on low heat setting 6 to 8 hours or until pork is tender.

Making Christmas Meaningful for Kids



Ask any kid what most excites him about Christmas, and gifts are bound to be at the top of the list. There's no question that gift-giving — and receiving — is one of the joys of the season, especially for kids, but it's hard not to feel totally overwhelmed and bombarded by store retailers making it the whole reason for the season. Here are a few ideas to help them focus on the more meaningful aspects of Christmas.

Gifts of Self

Christmas is the season of giving, but we all know the best gift you can give is the gift of self — and it's never too early to start teaching children this lesson. For kids, it could be something like doing chores without complaining or making an extra effort to be nice to a sibling. There are lots of ideas for directing children's attention to the needs and happiness of others: volunteering with them at a food bank, having them make gifts for siblings or other family members, or making some cookies to bring over to an elderly neighbor. It doesn't have to be something big, just something that helps them give of themselves.



Make Them Wait

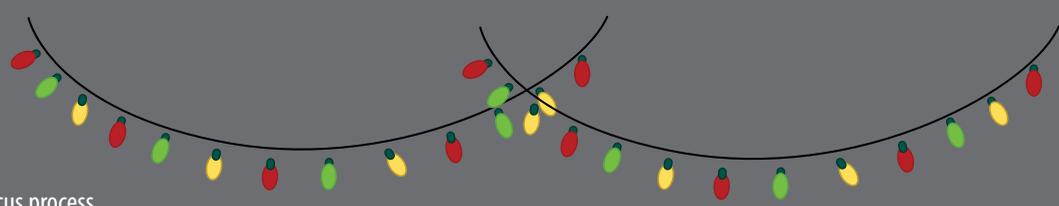
Before opening presents on Christmas morning, my parents made us sit down and eat breakfast first. I used to think this was a special form of torture my parents derived to torment us — I swear it was the only time of year they had a second cup of coffee in the morning — but as I got older, I saw the wisdom of my parent's ways. It took our mind off the gifts and helped us focus on what was more important — spending time with family. The wait was made more bearable with special breakfast fare, and as we grew older, we actually came to enjoy this Christmas morning routine.

Give Them Traditions

Many of the gifts you give your kids will be forgotten by next Christmas, but they will cherish memories of special family traditions for years to come. Make a point to create a few family traditions during the season: They don't have to be many or extravagant, but something you find enjoyable and that you can maintain year to year.

How do you make the Christmas season meaningful for your kids?

Christmas Fun Facts



"White Christmas" (1954), starring Bing Crosby and Danny Kaye, was the first movie to be made in Vista Vision, a deep-focus process.

A Christmas club, a savings account in which a person deposits a fixed amount of money regularly to be used at Christmas for shopping, came about around 1905.

A traditional Christmas dinner in early England was the head of a pig prepared with mustard.

According to the National Christmas Tree Association, Americans buy 37.1 million real Christmas trees each year; 25 percent of them are from the nation's 5,000 choose-and-cut farms.

After "A Christmas Carol," Charles Dickens wrote several other Christmas stories, one each year, but none was as successful as the original.

At Christmas, Ukrainians prepare a traditional twelve-course meal. A family's youngest child watches through the window for the evening star to appear, a signal that the feast can begin.

Before settling on the name of Tiny Tim for his character in "A Christmas Carol," three other alliterative names were considered by Charles Dickens. They were Little Larry, Puny Pete, and Small Sam.

Charles Dickens' initial choice for Scrooge's statement "Bah Humbug" was "Bah Christmas."

Christmas trees are edible. Many parts of pines, spruces, and firs can be eaten. The needles are a good source of vitamin C. Pine nuts, or pine cones, are also a good source of nutrition.

During the Christmas buying season, Visa cards alone are used an average of 5,340 times every minute in the United States.

For every real Christmas tree harvested, 2 to 3 seedlings are planted in its place.

Testosterone and Heart Disease – Facts and Caveats

Like most urologists, endocrinologists, and cardiologists, I have received numerous calls from men who have symptoms of low testosterone, documented decrease in their blood testosterone level, and who are receiving testosterone replacement therapy about a study that appeared in a reputable medical journal that treatment with testosterone increases the risk of heart disease.

Let's look at some facts. The human body is always trying to achieve homeostasis, which is defined as "The ability or tendency of an organism or cell to maintain internal equilibrium by adjusting its physiological processes." What does this mean? It means that the body is always trying to stay normal without deviations from normal.

For example, if a man drinks too much water, the kidneys will increase the excretion of water. If a man is dehydrated, the kidneys will try and conserve water to prevent the problems associated with dehydration. If a man has diabetes, the doctor will recommend a treatment to lower the blood sugar. If a man has high blood pressure, the doctor will recommend dietary changes, exercise, and perhaps medication to lower the blood pressure.

If a man has anemia or a low blood count because of iron deficiency, the doctor will prescribe iron supplements. If a man has a deficiency in vitamin D, then the doctor will recommend increase the consumption of this necessary vitamin. These actions are what doctors do every day; they attempt to achieve a normal equilibrium in the body, as this is the best way to restore and maintain health.

This same reasoning applies to men who are deficient in testosterone. Testosterone is a necessary hormone produced in the testicles that is responsible for a man's sex drive, muscle mass, energy level, bone strength, and even a man's mood which may cause depression if the hormone is low and not returned to normal.

There are more than 13 million men in the United States who suffer from testosterone deficiency. For men who receive treatment, they usually report significant improvement in their symptoms. There are many conflicting reports about testosterone and heart disease. There are even studies that support that low testosterone increases the risk of heart disease and that treating the deficiency with hormone replacement therapy may be protective of heart disease.

I would like to list several comments about the study that was reported in the recent Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA).

Of nearly 7,500 guys who did not get extra T, about 1 in 5 had bad cardiovascular outcomes, including stroke, heart attack or death. In the more than 1,200 men who got testosterone, nearly 1 in 4 had those terrible problems, an increased risk of nearly 30 percent. A truly scientific study has similar number of study patients in each group, not 7500 in the control group and 1200 in the experimental group. The researchers concluded that taking testosterone came with an increased risk of an adverse outcome.

If a statistician would add up the actual reported events in the paper for each group and divide by the numbers of men in each group. What you will find is that the absolute risk of events (death, heart attack, or a stroke) was 10% in men treated with T and 21% in men not treated. That's right- the risk was REDUCED BY HALF in men treated with T.

So a closer scrutiny needs to be done before conclusions can be made and distributed to the media. This is obviously the opposite of what the authors reported. They come up with absolute risk rates that are not explained by any numbers in their paper. They used a complex statistical analysis to get to their conclusions without showing the numbers it was based on.

That's not the whole story, though. Dr. Anne Cappola of the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania wrote in an accompanying editorial: "The most important question is the generalizing the results of this study to the broader population of men taking testosterone . . ." The take home message is not possible to generalize from this study to the entire population of men, some of whom may have a low testosterone level.

That's a very big caveat: By definition, all the men in the study were older than 60 and all had heart problems. It's still not clear whether those same risks apply to younger, healthier guys. "These were sick, older veterans," Dr. Michael Ho, a cardiologist with the VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System who helped direct the study, said in an interview. Many were obese, had diabetes, and other ailments, he said. Obese men with diabetes and other co-morbid conditions are certainly at risk for heart disease, stroke, and even death.

Bottom Line: So what is a man who has low testosterone to do? I would suggest that they have a discussion with their doctor. If they have symptoms of low testosterone, and a documented level of low testosterone blood test, then the doctor and the patient have to weigh the risks of testosterone replacement therapy versus the benefits. Certainly if the benefits outweigh the risks and the risks are composed of an older man with heart disease, diabetes, and other illnesses, then raising the testosterone level may not be in his best interest.