

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Phosphorus - Are we getting Too Much?

Add one more mineral to the too-much/too-little worry list! We have to have it, it's in many foods, and it had not been one we ever seemed to think much about. Now however there is a growing pile of evidence that too much phosphorus might be not only dangerous but be the source of a lot of health problems. It might be a reason why too much soda is linked to illnesses, osteoporosis, hardening of the arteries and more. Ow!

Along with calcium, phosphorus is necessary to make strong bones and teeth. We need it to make proteins. It affects a lot of our hormones. And it is absolutely essential in every cell because it is part of the compound that carries energy in our bodies. Without phosphorus we're dead.

But as with many things in life, too much of a good thing can be a bad thing. And there's a lot of medical evidence piling up that suggests we are getting so much phosphorus (P is the chemical symbol for it) now that it has become a bad thing. Too much P upsets the hormone system that controls how we absorb calcium. That seems to be doing several things - it's taking calcium out of bones to try to get the two minerals back in balance. With less calcium in bones we get osteoporosis, weak hollow bones.

Another thing the upset hormones do is increase inflammation in our blood vessels, and they tell calcium to settle in. So our doctors tell us we have calcified arteries, or atherosclerosis. And that soon turns into higher blood pressure. Plus, between the inflammation and the extra calcium running around in there, our kidneys throw up their hands and say "Ugh, we're sick too!" Kidney disease is on the rise, and all the P in our diets might be partly to blame for it.

So where is all this extra phosphorus coming from? Some people would like to blame all the soda we drink, especially the diet soda. It is true that cola sodas, the dark ones, both regular and diet, do use phosphorus as the acid. But when you look at how much phosphorus there is in other foods you soon see that while they might be part of it, they are not the big problem.

For example, a 12 oz can of cola soda has between 25 and 65 mg of P. But a fast food chicken sandwich has from 375 to 450 mg. That's a big difference! In fact, a lot of the phosphorus in

our diets comes from fast foods, frozen prepared foods and baked goods or mixes for baked goods. Some other examples: a fast food biscuit has around 400 mg. Add in the bacon, cheese and egg and it's soon over 500 mg. Even fast food milkshakes have 350 to 475 mg. Chicken nuggets have between 250 and 350 mg in a 3 oz serving. Frozen pancakes have almost 400 mg, pancakes from a mix have about 120, but homemade pancakes only have about 60 mg.

Does that give you a hint about where this is all coming from? Many food additives have phosphorus. Baking powder in mixes usually has it. Flavorings in fast food and commercial frozen meats use it to keep the meat from dripping out all its good juices. Lunch meats and deli meats use it to help hold the meat together. Almost half the most popular foods in the grocery store have phosphorus added to them.

We only need about 700 mg a day. A nationwide survey estimates that many of us eat more than double that amount! If you want to lower your intake and increase your chances of a longer, healthier life, cut back on fast foods and prepared foods. And read food labels. Try to cut back on foods that have 'phosphate' or 'phosphoric acid' in the ingredient list. Look for alternatives that don't have phosphate on their label.

Cooking from scratch at home will help too. There are lots of peaches in the market now. Here's a delicious breakfast that you prepare the night before, then bake in the morning. And there are no added phosphates. Enjoy!

Just Peachy French Toast

3 Tbsp soft tub margarine	1/3 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
1/2 tsp each cinnamon and nutmeg	2 cups peeled, chopped fresh peaches
1/2 cup skim milk	2 eggs, or equivalent egg substitute
1 tsp vanilla extract	9 slices, 1 inch thick, Cuban bread

Spray a 9 inch baking pan with cooking spray. Melt margarine. Combine margarine, sugar, cinnamon and nutmeg, then spread in baking pan. Sprinkle peaches over top. In shallow bowl whisk together milk, egg and vanilla. Dip bread slices in the milk then arrange over peaches. Cover and refrigerate 2 to 12 hours. To cook, preheat oven to 375° F. Bake for 25 minutes. Turn slices of bread over and bake another 25 minutes, until top is golden brown. Serve with peaches on top of bread. Serves 9.

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