

NUTRITION BITS

# Have a healthy St. Patrick's Day with Irish food, dark beer

By Jenny Stranzl

ONE OF MY favorite holidays is two days away. Those of us who love the color green, shamrocks, Guinness and the pub scene are eagerly awaiting St. Patrick's Day. You are probably wondering why a long distance run-



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ner and nutrition student would tell you how awesome it is to partake in St. Patty's Day festivities. After all, as Irish entertainer Alex Levine once said, "Only Irish coffee provides in a single glass all four essential food groups: alcohol, caffeine, sugar and fat." The reason is the potential health benefits of alcohol and Irish foods. In recent years, studies have indicated alcohol may lower the risk of heart disease in both men and women. Dark beers contain flavonoids — antioxidants that may reduce the harmful effects of LDL, or "bad" cholesterol in the body.

Of course, that doesn't give you the green light to pound endless pints of any dark-looking beer. All alcohol consumption should be done in moderation. One drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men is considered moderate. Keep in mind that the red cups we like to fill up at the keg are not the recommended serving size. A serving of one drink is considered to be a 12-ounce beer or wine cooler, five ounces of wine or 1.5 ounces of distilled spirits. Traditional foods in the Irish diet are not only delicious but also rank among the most nutritious. Cabbage, carrots,

parsnips, kale and potatoes are all wholesome eats, although they lose their healthy points when they're saturated with cream and butter, which adds fat and cholesterol. But have no fear. Any lass or lad can still enjoy a hearty Irish meal with a few changes to an original recipe. For instance, Irish soda bread can be turned into a great complex carbohydrate. To make whole-wheat raisin soda bread, substitute one cup of all-purpose flour (in the original recipe) with one cup of whole-wheat flour. Or, if you want to eat some potato pancakes, substitute regular sour cream with a low-fat ver-

sion or unsweetened applesauce. If you're not into the traditional St. Patrick's Day staples, get festive with other green — and healthy — foods. For instance, have a mixed-greens salad. Cut a kiwi in half and eat the insides with a spoon, or slice up an avocado, which is full of healthy fats. And pasta lovers can exchange a plain pack of noodles for a tasty spinach flavor. The key, as always, is to eat, drink and be merry — in moderation.

Jenny Stranzl is a senior majoring in nutrition. Readers may submit questions to her via e-mail at [js636@psu.edu](mailto:js636@psu.edu).

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# Sneak small amounts of activity into daily routine for adequate exercise

By Jill Garrigan

AS A COLLEGE student, you probably have lots of reasons for not exercising: classes, studying, social events, lack of money, fatigue. But with a little creative planning, you'll be surprised how easy it is to fit activity into your day and your budget.



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How much activity do you need? The newest guidelines call for 60 to 90 minutes most days of the week. That may sound like a lot, but activity can be accumulated throughout the day a few minutes at a time. For instance, walking to and from class counts as activity if you move quickly. Add that to some time on a treadmill and you're well on your way to fulfilling your daily requirement. Try some of these ideas for adding a bit more activity to your day.

Engage your abdominal muscles. Put a pillow behind your back while you are driving, and use your abdominal muscles to squeeze the pillow against the car seat. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Read or study while you ride a stationary bike. It accomplishes two tasks at one time. Tape your professor's lecture, then replay it on a portable tape player while you take a walk. Do sit-ups and push-ups during the commercial breaks when you are watching TV. Sit on a stability ball rather than a chair when you are doing desk work.

Repeatedly tense and relax the buttocks muscles while you're sitting. Press your shoulders against the back of your chair for a period of time, then release. It strengthens your back. Go hiking instead of out to eat. Join a sports club. We have more than 50 sports and activity clubs at this university. To find out what Penn State offers call 865-9202.

Jill Garrigan is the fitness activities coordinator at Penn State Intercollegiate Athletics. Readers may submit fitness questions to [fitnessoffice@psu.edu](mailto:fitnessoffice@psu.edu).

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