



# The Beacon

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## Med-Cert Medical Management Resources

**“Guiding your way to better health management”**

### How to Be a Health Advocate

Any patient who has a serious health problem or faces a major course of medical treatment would be wise to take someone along on doctors' appointments. It makes sense. Having a family member or friend present is like having another set of ears to hear what the doctor is saying and a second voice to ask the questions that need to be asked. When a person's health is at stake, it can be incredibly stressful, which means the patient is probably not operating at 100% of his/her mental capacity.

Most doctors appreciate an advocate being present, especially if the patient is under great stress or is otherwise unable to comprehend all that's being discussed. But just accompanying someone on a doctor's appointment is not enough. *Here's how to be a good advocate...*

**Write questions in advance.** We've all heard this time and time again, but there really is no substitute for writing down the questions you want to ask the doctor. To use your time with the doctor most efficiently, go one step further.

Divide the questions into two categories.

- First list the questions that apply directly to the patient, such as "What do you expect to find from this test?" or "Should the medication be taken in the morning or evening?"
- Then list the questions that involve the advocate or caregiver, such as "Will he need assistance at home after the surgery?"

**Be sure the patient is included.** Once at the doctor's office, make sure the doctor speaks directly to the patient at all times. Too often, the doctor assumes that the patient won't understand what's being discussed and speaks to the advocate. But even if the patient doesn't understand, he still can hear and probably feels nervous. It's very reassuring when the doctor focuses on the patient. On the other hand, if the doctor ignores the advocate's questions, it may be helpful for the patient to say, "I've brought along my friend (daughter, neighbor, etc.), and I'd like her to be included in all discussions." During the appointment, the advocate should take notes. If the doctor asks the patient a question, the advocate first should let the patient try to answer. If he cannot, then the advocate can respond, if appropriate. Before leaving, the advocate should verbally review what the doctor has said.

**Don't forget the office staff.** The advocate should introduce himself to the receptionist and any staffers who assist during the appointment. Be sure also to get the name of the doctor's primary nurse. Tell the receptionist and the doctor's nurse, if possible, that you are a friend or relative of the patient. Ask if it is okay if you call either of them directly if you have any follow-up questions or concerns. Ask for the best times to make such calls.

Most important, don't be shy. Remember that you are representing a person who is relying on you for help.

### Five Rules for Healthful Snacking

**Rule 1.** Drink water first. Often, we head for a snack when we're actually thirsty. Drink a 12-ounce glass of water, and wait 10 minutes. If you are still hungry, select a healthful snack.

**Rule 2.** Choose a snack food that still bears a resemblance to its original form. Natural food - the most healthful food - comes from the earth or an animal. Lettuce grows in the dirt. Oranges and nuts hang from trees. Corn, wheat and oats grow in fields. The fillet or steak you're having for dinner was part of an animal before it landed on your table. When you apply this concept to snacks, it's fairly easy to make healthful choices. Cheetos, for example, are a long, long way from the corn from which they are made - many synthetic ingredients are added. An unsweetened rice cake, on the other hand, still looks quite a bit like rice.

**Rule 3.** Avoid fat- and sugar-laden snacks. If a sweetener or oil is the first or second ingredient on the label list, skip this snack.

**Rule 4.** Keep portions small. The more fat or sugar in the snack (cheese, nuts and dried fruit), the smaller the portion should be. Recommended snack size is one ounce of cheese... eight nuts... or two tablespoons of dried fruit. Watery, fiber-rich snacks, such as fresh fruit or vegetables, can be eaten in larger

portions - a half-cup to one cup is reasonable.

**Rule 5.** Drink a cup of hot mint tea with your snack. It aids your digestion and promotes absorption of nutrients, which improves the satisfaction you derive from the food.

### Snack Suggestions...

**Raw almonds, hazelnuts or pecans... whole fruit... celery sticks, carrots or a rice cake** covered with a tablespoon of nut butter (almond, sesame, cashew) or hummus (mashed chickpeas flavored with lemon juice, garlic and oil)... **whole-grain muffin** (no bigger than a tennis ball) containing fruit, nuts and/or ground seeds and made with honey or cane sugar - not corn syrup... **vegetable salads**, such as cooked and chilled beets drizzled with olive oil and a sprinkle of goat cheese or cole slaw made with oil and vinegar rather than mayonnaise... **air-popped popcorn** -- plain or seasoned with garlic or a pinch of sea salt... **small baked potato**, seasoned with herbs and a sprinkle of oil (put extra potatoes in the oven when you make dinner and refrigerate them for snacks that can be eaten later)... and **rice** -- a half-cup, with nuts and a dash of oil.



### ASK A NURSE

**Q:** I have diabetes, and I've started buying sugar-free products, but most of them contain "sugar alcohols." What is this, and is it safe for diabetics?

**A:** **Sugar alcohols are a type of nutritive sweetener.** The most common types are *mannitol*, *sorbitol* and *xylitol*. They each contain about one-half to one-third fewer calories than regular sugar. Because sugar alcohols don't cause sudden increases in blood sugar, candy, cookies, soft drinks and other products that contain sugar alcohols are safe for people with diabetes. However, eating sugar alcohols can cause bloating and gas. In some people, sugar alcohols can cause diarrhea.

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**Q:** Is it true that normal body temperature may be different for an older person?

**A:** **Yes. Although typical temperature** registered on an oral thermometer is generally thought to be 98.6° F, temperature typically ranges from 94° F to 99.6° F in people age 65 and older. **Implication:** Any temperature higher than 99° F may be regarded as a fever in an older person whose temperature is typically 97° F or less. To determine your usual body temperature, take your temperature a few times during the day when you are not ill.

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**Q:** What's the difference between food labels that say "sugar free" versus "no added sugar"?

**A:** **According to FDA regulations,** the claim "sugar free" on a label means that one serving of the food contains only a small amount of sugar (less than 0.5 g). "No added sugars" or "no sugar added" means that no sugar and no ingredients containing sugar, such as jelly, honey or fruit juice concentrate, are added.

### BANANA FACTS

Most people know that bananas are an excellent source of potassium (one ripe banana supplies more than 10% of an adult's daily requirement of the mineral). That's important because according to a study conducted at Tulane University, people with a low dietary intake of potassium are 28% more likely to suffer a stroke than those who consume higher levels.



### Lesser-known medicinal uses of bananas...

- ❖ **Depression.** Bananas are a good source of *tryptophan* (a precursor to *serotonin*, a brain chemical that helps regulate mood).
- ❖ **Diarrhea.** Unripe bananas and plantains (high-starch, green bananas that are typically cooked) are a rich source of *tannins*, astringent plant compounds that help stop water accumulation in the intestines, thus diminishing diarrhea.
- ❖ **Heartburn and ulcers.** Bananas neutralize acid and soothe and coat esophageal tissue with *pectin* (a substance used as a thickener and stabilizer in jellies).

**Important:** In rare cases, bananas may cause an allergic reaction. Bananas with blackened skin can increase blood sugar levels. Because bananas have high levels of potassium, people with kidney problems should check with their doctors before eating this fruit.

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### Recipe Corner

#### GRANOLA

This popular food from the 1970's is enjoying a renaissance. It can be eaten as a cereal, a snack, or sprinkled over yogurt.

- 3 cups Rolled oats (NOT quick or instant)
- 1 cup Pecan pieces
- 1 cup Coconut, shredded
- ¼ cup Sunflower seeds, shelled, unsalted
- ½ cup Honey
- ½ cup Brown sugar
- ¼ cup Canola oil
- 1 ounce Water
- ½ cup Raisins
- ½ cup Dried apricots, diced

Pre-heat the oven to 275 F. Lightly oil a cookie sheet. Toss together the oats, pecans, coconut, and sunflower seeds. In a separate bowl, mix together the honey, sugar, oil, and water. Pour over the oats mixture and toss well. Spread on cookie sheet. Bake for one hour or until evenly browned (stir often). Cool. Toss in raisins and apricots. Store at room temperature in an airtight.



This newsletter is brought to you courtesy of Med-Cert, Inc. Our sources for this edition were the American Diabetes Association, Bottom Line's Daily Health News and Secrets, and [whatscookingamerica.net](http://whatscookingamerica.net).