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## NEWS

### The LEF Health Advisors Your Link to Life Extension

As many people are aware, the Health Advisory Department is one of the most valuable resources available to members of LEF. In fact, this unique group sets The Life Extension Foundation apart from other organizations that merely sell supplements.

What is the main role of a health advisor? Quite simply, to answer a myriad of questions relating to health and wellness from members who are beginning a supplement regime for the first time, or to those who are looking to fine-tune their current program. For people who simply want to review the spectrum of supplements they are currently taking, a health advisor will help to ensure that they are not overlapping or overdosing on products. A large number of member questions pertain to the origin of a product or ingredient. For example, a caller might have an allergy and be concerned about the source of a particular ingredient.

Other callers are concerned that their doctor may not be providing them with optimal care. Life Extension staff physicians are available to help members find solutions that may have been overlooked by their treating doctors. Life Extension staff physicians are an information dissemination service only, not a substitute for hands-on medical care.

Members who choose to have their blood tested through LEF are given first priority to have their results reviewed and interpreted by staff medical doctors Michelle Morrow and Mark LaPorta or clinical nutritionist, Sharonda Poma, Ph.D. who will thoroughly review lab results looking for trends and abnormalities before discussing them with members. These interpretations are not meant to substitute for medical care, but can help guide a member with blood abnormalities to the appropriate specialist or recommend lifestyle changes that could help correct the underlying problem.

States Dr. Poma, "as a clinical nutritionist and nutrition research scientist, I feel it's important to have a complete picture of the member prior to discussing their labs with them, because their history and other variables will have a direct impact on their results. Therefore, I begin each assessment by first evaluating height, weight, age, medical history, medication and supplement use, and activity level."



"I then provide a general overview of each blood panel and explain any abnormalities in more detail. If additional tests are in order, I proceed with recommendations. I also address any questions or concerns that the member may have regarding their results. However, I do not provide disease-specific diagnoses. I always advise members to share their results and their supplement use with their primary care physician."

According to health advisor Linda Robison, "many first-time supplement users are unaware that the time of day they take a particular product may be very important to achieve the best results. For instance, policosanol, used for cholesterol reduction, must be taken in the evening for best results. If one takes it in the morning, it reduces the effectiveness."

Members will often contact the advisory group seeking help with specific health concerns. According to Vincent Annunziata, Health Advisory Group Manager, "many people are dissatisfied with the answers they get from their doctors, so they are using a dual approach. They may substitute or combine our disease protocols with their current treatment. Callers want to know if it is safe to combine certain supplements with the drugs they are taking. We can provide the information if it has been published. Regardless, we always remind callers to check with their doctors first before taking any supplement."

Life Extension magazine and the protocol book Disease Prevention and Treatment also generate calls from members who may need help with dauntingly complex medical terms and concepts. Says Robison, "magazine articles and (disease) protocols can be somewhat difficult for the layperson to understand." Adds Annunziata, "advisors are often trying to explain what or why something was written in the magazine."

Health advisors have a wide variety of available resources to locate the information they need. A newly upgraded shared database provides detailed product information and related topics such as drug interactions and referenced studies. If the answer cannot be found in the database, then advisors can contact the LEF lab in New York for assistance.

Life Extension magazine also provides the advisors with the opportunity to stay current on the latest scientific research. When time allows, the advisors break up into two groups to review each issue of the magazine. These meetings also allow the advisors to discuss other issues such as product inquiries and feedback on the LEF product line. The LEF website is another valuable resource. The site is constantly being updated with the most recent advances in science and medicine.

Keeping up with the latest in scientific and medical research is a must for the health advisors. Life

Extension's extensive library includes the latest scientific journals such as the New England Journal of Medicine, the Journal of Nutrition, Science, Nature, and the Journal of the National Cancer Institute, to name just a few. They also have access to magazines, newsletters, and medical and scientific search engines for on-line research. Regular weekly meetings provide an opportunity for the advisors to learn about new products, the latest research, medical breakthroughs, and to share ideas or solve problems.

For members with unidentified health problems or several degenerative illnesses, advisors will often recommend blood testing. Says Robison "when a member has a question about a specific health concern such as feeling fatigued for no apparent reason, testing for hormones, cytokines and cancer markers can help get to the cause." Blood testing may also be recommended for those people who feel overwhelmed by the number of supplements offered and who are unsure of what might be best for them. In this case, a blood test will help the person optimize their supplement regime.

Elizabeth Weinstock, Senior Health Advisor, believes it is a good practice in general to have routine blood testing on a yearly basis, especially as one ages. According to Weinstock, "if a person decides to implement a hormone replacement program, it is very important to have baseline blood testing as well as periodic follow-up blood testing to assure hormone levels remain optimal. Equally important is the need to perform blood testing when one suspects the onset of an illness or disease, or wishes to monitor the progression or waning of the illness."

The diverse functions of the Health Advisory Department make it a hub of Life Extension activity. In order to assist members with various health concerns, advisors are in continuous contact with staff physicians, the blood lab, product developers, customer service, the executive office, and the media departments. Twelve health advisors are available to answer questions by phone, e-mail, FAX, surface mail, and even on-line in the LEF chat room.

What is most gratifying about the job? Says Elizabeth Weinstock, "my position as a senior health advisor for the Life Extension Foundation is wonderful. My job allows me to use all my skills and knowledge to help people recover from illness, prevent disease, maintain good health, and fight aging. It also allows me to grow, develop and learn. Everyday I discover something new, and more often than not I use that new discovery to assist someone in need. I am honored to be able to use the knowledge I have to make a difference in someone's life."

The Health Advisory Department is open 8:30 am to 10 pm M-F, Saturday 9 am to 8 pm, and Sundays 11 am to 7 pm. 1-800-226-2370.

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