

# Healthnet Newsletter

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## Responding to the Ebola Crisis

**H**ow many of us were riveted by the headlines surrounding the Ebola outbreak in Liberia? Have you followed with rapt attention news coverage of Ebola cases diagnosed outside of Africa? Certainly more than a few of us, especially first responders and health professionals, have lost some sleep over how prepared the U.S. healthcare system is for handling Ebola cases and preventing the spread of this disease.

Where can you find the latest accurate information and recommendations about Ebola? Check out the National Library of Medicine’s (NLM) *Disaster Information Management Research Center* or DIMRC (<http://disasterinfo.nlm.nih.gov>). DIMRC is part of NLM’s *Specialized Information Services (SIS) Division*. This division is responsible for collecting, organizing, and distributing health information resources and informatics research related to natural, accidental, and intentional disasters. Recently, DIMRC supported public health officials responding to the H1N1 flu outbreak. They also assisted disaster teams during the recent earthquakes in Haiti and Chile, the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, and the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant disaster by providing timely access to evidence-based information.

What will you find on the DIMRC’s Ebola Outbreak resource page? There is a broad array of useful information and resources organized for quick access. You will find videos, conference materials, guidelines, instructional materials, clinical trials, maps, and websites from federal, state and local government agencies, U.S. and international organizations, and advocacy groups. In many cases, commercial publishers are making content available for free. In perusing DIMRC, I located the University of Nebraska’s protocols and procedures for treating Ebola patients, the U.S. Army guidelines for cleaning contaminated patient care areas, the CDC’s Ebola Virus Disease Distribution map showing reported cases in Africa from 1976—2014, and the European Union’s training tutorial for safe use of personal protective equipment. Wow!

Why not share the availability of the DIMRC with town officials, public safety, public health, and school officials in your community! Timely access to evidence-based information can help communities make informed decisions and take measured responses to Ebola and other serious health crises.

With the holiday season fast approaching, we need to take a deep breath and practice a new mantra. We all need to be reminded to take care of our own health needs (physical and mental) before tending to the needs of others. Instead of fretting about menus, gifts, visits, and events, practice a little self-love first. If you stay well, then you can share your best with others.

Cheers!

Wendy

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Cover Image:

Vintage Thanksgiving card from [www.yestercards.com](http://www.yestercards.com)

# How to Dispose of Drugs Safely and Other Rx Questions

Once again you have missed your town's day for disposing of unused medications. Your pharmacy may offer a service for safe disposal, but there is a fee. Do you have other options? How to discard unused or expired medications is a question consumers frequently ask pharmacists at the Food and Drug Administration. Yes, you can actually call FDA pharmacists at 1-855-543-DRUG with any drug related questions! According to the FDA you can simply throw away **most—not all**, medications in the household trash after mixing them with coffee grounds or kitty litter and sealing the mixture in a container devoid of personal information. Some medications, however, are so dangerous to children and pets that the FDA recommends flushing them down the toilet. Although environmentalists advise against this practice because of harm it may cause aquatic life, the FDA notes that most human drugs enter the water supply when we excrete them. You can review or print a list of these extremely dangerous drugs and disposal instructions at: <http://tinyurl.com/2fq2xor>.

FDA pharmacists also receive many questions about possible side effects of medications, and how to report adverse reactions to medications. MedWatch is the FDA's program for reporting adverse reactions. Consumers can access this service with this toll-free number: **1-800-FDA-1088**. By law, drug manufacturers are required to report every adverse drug reaction observed during clinical trials, regardless of how few people were affected. Drug reactions are reported on the package insert for the medication. You can now easily find package inserts using the National Library of Medicine's *DailyMed* website.

On *DailyMed*, you can enter your medication's brand or generic name (for both human and veterinary drugs), as well as the formulation and dosing. In addition to observed adverse reactions, the package insert also includes information on interactions with other medications and with foods, precautions, warnings, and for whom the medication is **contraindicated**.

*DailyMed* provides color images of tablets and capsules to identify drugs, and includes links to MedlinePlus, Clinicaltrials.gov, and the Lactmed database. Lactmed indicates whether a drug has been found in breast milk, and so may pose a risk to breastfed infants.

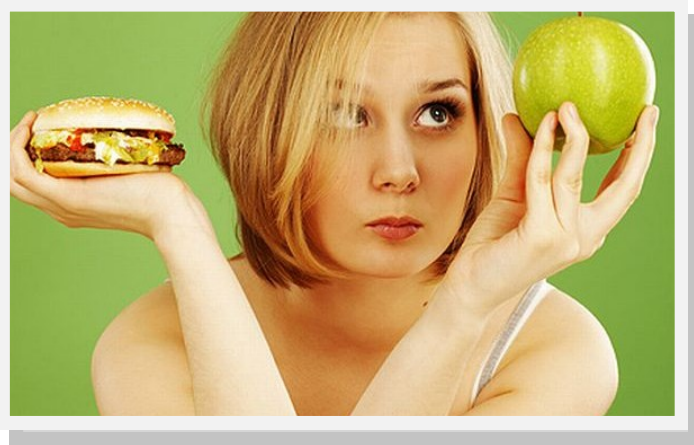
You can link to *DailyMed* from MedlinePlus ([www.medlineplus.gov](http://www.medlineplus.gov)) by clicking on the "Drugs and Supplements" tab (this tab appears on every MedlinePlus page), or by typing the URL [www.dailymed.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.dailymed.nlm.nih.gov).



# Weighing in on Diet Plans, Diet Fads, and Healthful Eating

With the calorie-laden Christmas and New Year holidays fast approaching, how many of us are considering shedding a few pounds now to balance out the extra pounds we might gain from those rounds of parties and cookie swaps to come? Americans love weight loss products especially, diet books. In preparing this article, I performed a quick Amazon search for books with “diet” in the title. My search yielded 102,836 results. Another indicator of their popularity is how many times people search Google for information about diet plans. Google’s 2013 *Year-End Zeitgeist* captured those diets we were most curious about. Google’s “top ten” list included (in order of decreasing popularity):

1. Juice Cleanse diet
2. Mediterranean diet
3. Master Cleanse diet
4. Ketogenic diet
5. Okinawa diet
6. Omnivore diet
7. Fruitarian diet
8. Pescetarian diet
9. Flexitarian diet.



Do these diets work? Could they be harmful? Should you spend collection development dollars to purchase books on trendy diet programs? Can we rely on our customers to read diet books critically?

As a consumer health librarian, it made me cringe to purchase Nina Teicholz’s book, *The Big Fat Surprise: Why Meat, Butter and Cheese Belong in a Healthy Diet* (Simon and Schuster, 2014. ISBN 978-1-4516-2442-7), without purchasing research-based, guides to good nutrition, healthful eating, exercise, and reducing risky health behaviors. Consider Marion Nestle’s *What to Eat*. (North Point: Farrar. 2006. 9780865477384), Dean Ornish’s *Eat More. Weigh Less*. (Harper Torch: Harper Collins. 2002 9780061096273), or Michael Pollan’s *In Defense of Food: An Eater’s Manifesto* (Penguin. 2008. 9781594201455).

According to a 2013 report from the Institute of Medicine, *U.S. Health in International Perspective: Shorter Lives, Poorer Health*, (<http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2013/US-Health-in-International-Perspective-Shorter-Lives-Poorer-Health.aspx>), there is substantial evidence (some of it controversial), linking diet to health. How much saturated fats, trans-fats, sodium, calcium iron, and vitamins we consume is linked to a variety of diseases (e.g. hypertension, cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis). Our consumption of fibers and grains are associated with lower risks of hyperlipidemia and some cancers. Low fruit and vegetable intake are associated with increased risk of obesity, coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes, hypertension, and colon cancer.

The IOM’s report notes from 1950 to 2000, the U.S. annual per capita food consumption of fruits and vegetables increased by 20 percent. Sadly, in contrast, our consumption of meats increased by 57 pounds, or 41 percent; our consumption of cheese by 22.1 pounds, or 287 percent!

In most of our libraries, there will probably be a copy of Ms. Teicholz’s book. For some important perspective, you may wish to post a copy of this excellent critical commentary of her book published on the *Huffpost Healthy Living* blog on May 5, 2014 (“The Greatest Dietary Guidance: If it gets Cold, Reheat it! [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-katz-md/diet-and-nutrition\\_b\\_5266165.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-katz-md/diet-and-nutrition_b_5266165.html)), by physician and nutrition expert, David L. Katz .

(Continued on next page)

Dr. Katz is on staff at the Prevention Research Center, Yale University School of Public Health and is an emergency room physician at Griffin Hospital in Derby, CT. Dr. Katz has also coauthored a review of popular diet programs evaluating how/whether those plans move us towards optimal eating behaviors. Eating optimally in turn supports longer, healthier lives. His review covers the following diets: Low carbohydrate, Low fat, Low glycemic, Mediterranean, Mixed balanced, Paleolithic, and Vegan. Dr. Katz's article appears in the Annual Review of Public Health, 2014 (Katz, D. L., and S. Meller. "Can We Say What Diet is Best for Health?" *Annual Review of Public Health* 2014. 35:83-103).

Following are some web resources you can consult when answering diet-related reference questions, purchasing diet books for your library's collection, or trying to determine the best approach for yourself or family member to loss extra weight, and keep it off:

## Web Resources for Evaluating Diet Plans

**American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.** Registered dietitians review consumer diet and lifestyle books with the aim of helping the public understand which diets are reasonable and which should be avoided. Reviews cover claims the author makes; what the diet plan entails; nutritional weaknesses and strengths; and what the registered dietitians' "bottom line" assessment is. Website link: <http://www.eatright.org/dietreviews/#.VDbH1PldXmt>

**U.S. News and World Reports "Best Diets":** In addition to ranking colleges and hospitals, the publisher also evaluates diets. USNWR convened a panel of dietitians to rate 32 popular diets on a scale of 1 to 5 for 7 criteria. Diets were evaluated for weight loss, ease of following, nutrition, safety, and suitability for diabetes and heart health. Visitors to the page can rearrange the rankings based on particular measure by clicking on that header. Website link: <http://health.usnews.com/best-diet>

**WebMD:** This health website offers facts on 109 popular diets. Each diet review includes the following: Promised results; Does it work ; What you can and cannot eat; Level of effort; Does it allow for dietary restrictions or preferences; Is it good for health conditions; and recommendations for further reading. In addition to the diets on the best seller lists are these interesting plans: African mango, Fat Smash , Personality Type, and Big Breakfast diets. Website link: <http://www.webmd.com/diet/evaluate-latest-diets>

**U.S Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Information Center:** The agency offers many useful handouts on smart, healthful approaches to weight loss and weight management. You will find fact sheets on popular diets, finding a weight loss program that works for you, how to evaluate claims for weight loss products, weight-loss and nutrition myths; and more. Website link: <http://www.nutrition.gov/weight-management/what-you-should-know-about-popular-diets>



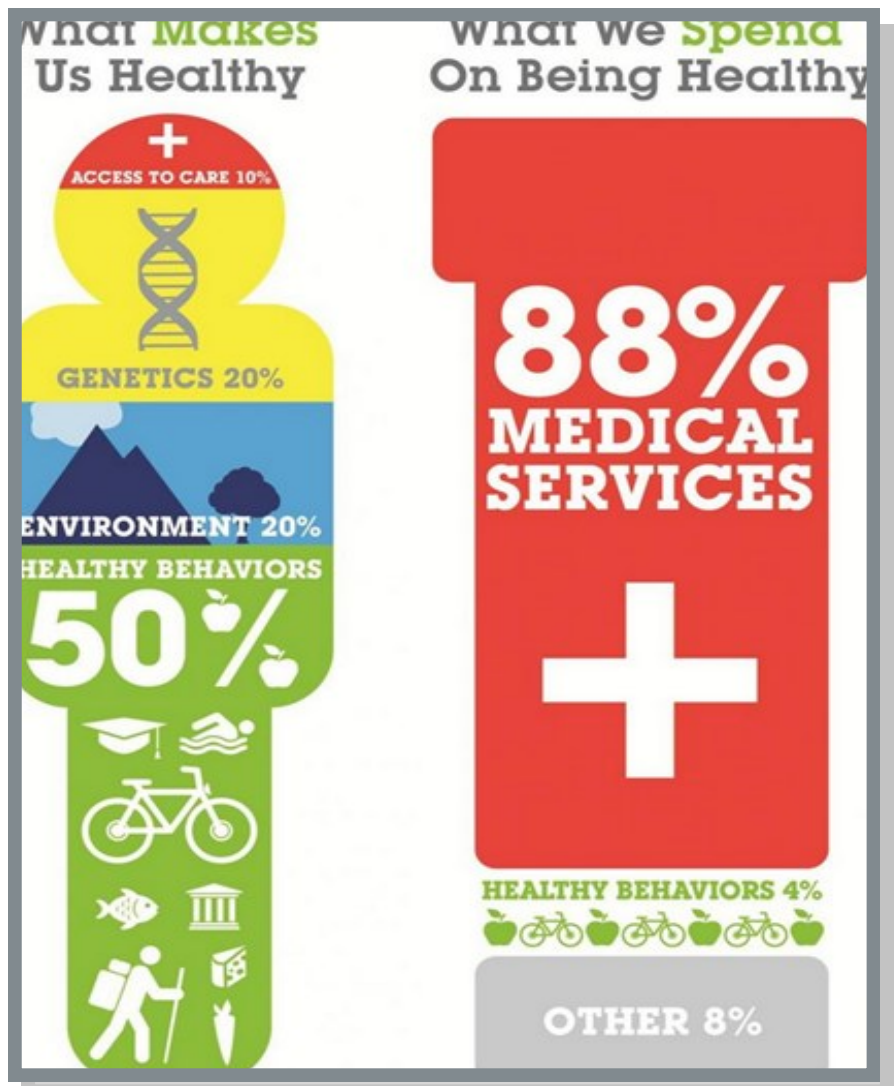
## Bring Out Your Inner Food Geek

Have you ever wondered which foods are the best source of magnesium, whether soy yogurt offers more calcium than dairy yogurt, or which foods offer the most energy per cup? Ponder no more. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Research Service's *National Nutrient Database* has the answers. In fact, this website allows you to rate and compare over 8000 raw and processed foods for their nutritional content.

The USDA's *National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference* lets you create nutritional profiles for individual foods, or groups of foods (e.g. breakfast cereals, restaurant foods, spices and herbs). You can rank individual foods by how much of a nutrient they provide, or create a report comparing food groups or individual foods by up to three nutrients. To answer our questions, the best source of calcium is one cup of calcium-fortified orange juice. The best three sources for magnesium are crude rice bran, molasses, and pumpkin seeds. For purposes of comparison, foods are measured by cup, or 100 grams. One caveat: one cup, or 100 grams, does not always represent a realistic serving size. After all, who is going to consume a cup of molasses to get their recommended intake of magnesium!

Visit this website to play with your food: <http://ndb.nal.usda.gov/ndb/nutrients/index>

### Food for thought...



Source: Bipartisan Policy Center "Lots to Lose: How American's Health and Obesity Crisis Threatens our Economic Future: June 2012. [http://bipartisanpolicy.org/sites/default/files/5023\\_BPC\\_NutritionReport\\_FNL\\_Web.pdf](http://bipartisanpolicy.org/sites/default/files/5023_BPC_NutritionReport_FNL_Web.pdf)

# **Toll-Free Pregnancy Riskline**

## ***MotherToBaby CT 1-800-325-5391***

The nine months of pregnancy can be a worry-filled time. A mom-to-be might wonder whether the chemicals her spouse is exposed to at work might be harmful to her baby; whether she should avoid a nephew with an infectious disease; or whether going through an airport security screening could jeopardize her pregnancy. Did you know there is a FREE, state-funded program, *MotherToBaby CT* which can answer questions about all types of exposures during pregnancy?

Pregnant or breast-feeding women and their partners, those planning a pregnancy, and health care providers may use this service for information about:

- Medications
- Radiation
- Infectious diseases
- Medical conditions
- User of drugs or alcohol
- Pesticides
- Occupational and environmental exposures

### **Contact Information**

Division of Medical Genetics

UConn Health Partners

65 Kane Street, Second Floor

West Hartford, CT 06119

**PHONE (statewide) 800-523-5391**

**PHONE (Hartford area) 860-523-6419**

Callers are asked about exposures to medications, chemicals, and illnesses. Their questions are answered by teratogen or genetics specialists. All information is kept confidential. Some callers may be asked to come to the Riskline's office in West Hartford for a detailed discussion. This visit is also free.



## Annie E. Casey Foundation’s “Kids Count” Celebrates 25 Years

Did you know last year almost a third of Connecticut children under 18 lived in families where no parent had regular, full-time employment? Did you know last year 7% of our children lived in families with incomes less than 50 percent of the federal poverty level? Did you know two thirds of our fourth-graders could not read proficiently, and in 2012, 15% of heads of households did not have a high school diploma? These and other state and national level statistics come from the Annie E Casey Foundation’s “KIDS COUNT” databook. This year the Foundation celebrates its 25th edition of this valuable report.

The annual report ranks states, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, by 16 different measures of child wellbeing in four broad areas: economic, education, health, and family and community. It also covers trends in child well-being, features policies and practices which have had a positive impact on child health and development, and shares stories from states on advocacy efforts that improved outcomes for children and families. The website’s “Data Center” enables you to access hundreds of indicators, download data, and create customized reports and graphics. You might consider this site when developing a community assessment for your next grant application. Visit the Foundation at: [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org).

## A New Twitter Tool for Following Ebola

Many people have turned to Twitter, as their primary source for following news about the Ebola outbreak.

Researchers at Northeastern University’s MoBS Lab have developed a tool which enhances your ability to keep up with Ebola developments via Twitter. Network scientist, Alessandro Vespignani and his team have collaborated with Italy’s ISI Foundation to create *Ebola Tracking*. Described as a “situational awareness tool”.

*Ebola Tracking* allows the public to follow in real time all the latest news and Twitter discussion on Ebola. The tool does this by pulling mentions of Ebola and related keywords from Twitter and displaying them on an interactive world map. The tool groups tweets by location. It also filters out junk and spam tweets.

Vespignani stresses that the tool only monitors news and discussions about Ebola. The tool does not track the virus or predict where it will spread.

([www.northeastern.edu/news/2014/11/ebolatracking](http://www.northeastern.edu/news/2014/11/ebolatracking))

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<http://library.uchc.edu/departm/hnet>

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