

S P R I N G
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ROUNDS

HARTFORD HOSPITAL'S WELLNESS MAGAZINE



Yeast: Itching for Relief

Yeast normally grows harmlessly in the vagina, digestive tract and mouth. When the fragile balance between yeast and bacteria in the vagina goes awry, overabundant yeast can cause *candidiasis*, or a yeast infection. The flare-up often follows a course of antibiotics, which kill the beneficial bacteria in the vagina, allowing the yeast to overgrow.

Hormonal fluctuations contribute to the condition, which commonly affects women of childbearing age before their periods or during pregnancy. Diabetic and HIV+ women are particularly susceptible. A yeast infection is not considered a sexually transmitted disease, although partners may harbor yeast (especially under the foreskin). Signs of a yeast infection include itching, and irritation, burning when urinating, and a white to yellow odorless, clumpy discharge.

"If you've never had a yeast infection before, see your doctor right away," advises Peter Doelger, M.D., an obstetrician-gynecologist at Hartford Hospital. "If you recognize the symptoms, go ahead and treat yourself with an over-the-counter cream or suppository. A one-day cream works just as well as a three-day product, but yeast infections often recur. See your doctor if you're not better after three days."

If swelling and irritation persist, your physician can prescribe Diflucan, a one-dose anti-fungal pill that fights the infection. But if your doctor rules out underlying medical problems, Dr. Doelger suggests some home remedies that sound like old wives' tales but reportedly work for some sufferers:

- Eat or apply yogurt containing *lactobacillus acidophilus* (check the label, since three-quarters of yogurt brands don't have live cultures).
- Avoid soap or perfumes in the vaginal area.
- Decrease sugar and alcohol intake.
- Don't sit around in a wet bathing suit.
- Wear all-cotton underwear.

If you do get a yeast infection, you probably won't be able to ignore it. Yeast infections are the #1 reason that women visit their gynecologist's office.

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Hartford Hospital's Wellness Magazine

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ROUNDS is a quarterly publication of Hartford Hospital. It is not intended to provide medical advice on individual health matters. Please consult your physician for any health concerns.

HEALTH TIPS

Food Fears: On the Alert for Allergies



New labeling laws call for fuller disclosure of hidden food dangers. Nearly three million Americans are allergic to peanuts, and another eight million have food allergies. As many as 250 Americans die each year and up to 30,000 are rushed to hospitals for life-saving emergency care.

An estimated two percent of adults and eight percent of children in the United States have food allergies, which cause the immune system to overreact in ways that can be life-threatening. While hives and eczema are the most common allergic skin reactions, food allergies can trigger asthma or a potentially fatal allergic reaction.

Deciphering misleading food labels can be tricky. For example, milk may be listed as casein or wheat as gluten, creating confusion for consumers. The Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act, which goes into effect next January, is designed to make deadly ingredients easier to identify.

The law requires food manufacturers to clearly state if a product contains any of the eight food allergens responsible for more than 90 percent of all allergic reactions. The risky foods include cow's milk, eggs, peanuts (actually a legume), wheat, soy, fish, shellfish and tree nuts (including hazelnuts and walnuts).

PHYSICIAN PROFILE

James E. Dougherty, M.D.

James E. Dougherty, M.D., FACC, FACP, a clinical cardiologist, has served as medical director of Hartford Hospital's heart transplant program since its founding in 1984. A graduate of Georgetown University School of Medicine in Washington, D.C., he completed his cardiovascular fellowship at Hartford Hospital, where he received Board-certification in internal medicine and in cardiovascular diseases.

In 1997, Dr. Dougherty earned an additional Board-certification in nuclear cardiology, after training in a subspecialty that hadn't existed when he went to medical school. In addition to the transplant program, which recently celebrated its twentieth anniversary, his areas of interest include heart failure, nuclear cardiology and non-invasive clinical cardiology. He is an associate clinical professor in the Department of Medicine at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine.

Listed among the "Best Doctors in Connecticut," Dr. Dougherty has published his findings in *Connecticut Medicine* and the *American Journal of Cardiology*, among other journals. His passions include skiing and tennis. With his wife, Maureen, he has been a foster parent to more than 100 local children. They have two sons of their own, one of whom is in medical school while the other is serving in the Marine Corps in Iraq.



Statin Safety

Cholesterol is vital to bodily functions—building new cells, producing hormones and contributing to the nervous system development and repair—but a diet rich in saturated fat, as well as genetic predisposition, can raise cholesterol to artery-clogging levels. High levels of cholesterol in the bloodstream are the ultimate cause of most cardiovascular disease.

When heart-healthy lifestyle changes such as a low animal-fat diet, losing weight, exercising, and quitting smoking aren't enough, at-risk patients often take prescription drugs called *statins* to aggressively lower their cholesterol levels.

"Lower is better when it comes to cholesterol," says James E. Dougherty, M.D., FACC, a clinical cardiologist. "Almost half of Americans will die of coronary disease, but only about half of the population is at goal when it comes to lowering cholesterol.

People think that they can do better with diet and exercise, but cholesterol rises with age even in vegetarians. Solid evidence-based medicine shows that those with diabetes or a high risk of cardiovascular disease should be taking these drugs."

Statins inhibit an enzyme that controls cholesterol production in the body. Marketed under such brand names as Lipitor, Zocor, Pravachol, Lescol and Crestor, they are the world's top-selling medicines. Lipitor alone accounts for \$10 billion in annual sales.

The nation's top heart groups are calling for more aggressive cholesterol treatment of people at the highest risk of dying from heart attacks and strokes. A recent British study found that Lipitor cut the risk of stroke by half and cardiovascular events by more than a third in diabetics.

"Statins are a remarkable class of drugs," says Paul D. Thompson, M.D., FACC, director of Preventive Cardiology, Cardiovascular Research and the Cholesterol Management Center at Hartford Hospital. "Studies have shown that statins reduce heart attacks, cardiac deaths, strokes, and the need for angioplasty and bypass surgery."

Statins are also being examined for possible benefits in other conditions including dementia, osteoporosis, and even cancer, but statins have serious dose-related side-effects. Baycol (cerivastatin) was pulled from the market in 2002 after muscle breakdown caused the deaths of 100 people taking the drug.

"The statin drugs are extremely efficient at lowering 'bad cholesterol' levels," says Anthony F. LaSala, M.D., FACC, a clinical cardiologist. "We see dramatic changes in blood studies. Patients should make sure to tell physicians what other medications they're taking since antibiotics can significantly increase statin levels, for example. The take-home message is that most statins are extraordinarily safe, although it's risky to combine them with some antibiotic or antifungal drugs, as well as some other heart medicines."

"More than 100 million prescriptions have been filled in the United States," says Dr. Thompson, who has researched the drugs for all the major pharmaceutical companies. "I'm convinced that they reduce the risk of heart attack. The problem with media hype about their dangers is that patients may decide on their own to stop taking them."

"Statins are expensive medications," says Dr. Dougherty. "Generic drugs are cheaper, but not as powerful because as each new drug comes to market, it tends to be about 7 percent stronger than its predecessors. We can monitor side-effects with muscle enzyme and liver function tests, and these drugs have a long and strong safety record."

Pancreas Transplants Extend Diabetics' Lives



Dr. Kevin Charpentier

Diabetes shortens the lives of millions of Americans, raising their risk of death from heart disease or stroke. Blindness, amputation and organ failure are widespread in people with Type I, or “juvenile-onset” diabetes. Multiple daily injections replace the insulin the pancreas can’t produce, but the disease takes a devastating toll. Today, new hope exists for diabetics in the greater Hartford area, who no longer have to leave home for transplant surgery.

A pancreas transplant can reverse the disabling and life-threatening complications of Type I diabetes,

which afflicts more than a million Americans. Pancreas transplantation may halt or reverse the progression of diabetic end-organ complications. Transplant surgery is reserved for Type I diabetics who are experiencing kidney failure or a debilitating condition called hypoglycemic unawareness, which causes patients to pass out because they can’t sense their blood sugar dropping.

“Transplant surgery provides instant gratification,” says Kevin P. Charpentier, M.D., director of the Pancreas

Transplantation Program at Hartford Hospital along with medical director K. Vinay Ranga, M.D. “There’s no better therapy than to give someone whose organs don’t work new organs that work normally.”

The organ shortage is alarming—more than 4,000 potential recipients are on waiting lists nationally. Hartford Hospital’s Transplant Center is one of the most comprehensive in New England, with a nationally recognized tissue-typing laboratory and an affiliated organ bank. Some patients receive a pancreas and a kidney from the same donor simultaneously, while others have a pancreas transplant after getting a kidney, usually from a live donor. Rarely, a diabetic with normal kidney function receives a pancreas only. “Pancreas transplantation presents a unique set of challenges,” explains Dr. Charpentier. “In properly selected patients, the results are outstanding.”

After a year, there’s a 95 percent patient survival rate. After successful transplantation, patients report better general health and enhanced vitality. The transplant team—nurse coordinator, nutritionist, psychologist and social worker—assess patients to ensure they’re strong enough to undergo surgery, both physically and mentally.

Not only does transplantation cure diabetes, but it also leads to significant improvements in vascular disease, stomach emptying, nerve function and eye problems. “Patients can resume a normal diet and live a natural, productive life,” says Dr. Charpentier.

“Successful transplant patients are healthier and live longer than diabetics who don’t have surgery.”

WHAT’S GOING AROUND...News & Breakthroughs

Smoke Slows Healing

Cigarette smoke hinders wound healing, according to scientists at the University of California, Riverside. Using mice and human cell cultures, researchers found that cigarette smoke damages the fibroblasts, cells within the body that migrate to wounds to speed healing and tissue repair. Previous research has shown that cigarette smoke also increases the risk of scarring.

Bran New Day

An eight-year study at Harvard University found that eating breakfast reduces susceptibility to obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. Regular breakfast eaters reduced their risk of obesity by up to 50 percent. Daily breakfast helps regulate blood sugar and control appetite throughout the day. Look for cereals with whole grain or bran first on the ingredient list and two or more grams of fiber per serving.

Hot Seat

Teens and young men may be harming their fertility with laptop computers, say researchers at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. High internal operating temperatures in laptops can heat up the scrotum and decrease sperm quality and quantity. The report in *Human Reproduction* warns that adolescent males who regularly use computers on their laps may be less fertile later.

Eyes On Greens

Antioxidants in kale, collard greens, broccoli, turnip greens, spinach and other green vegetables may help protect aging eyes from cataracts, say researchers at Ohio State University. The ultraviolet (UV) rays in sunlight are linked to cataracts, which afflict 20 million Americans. In the lab, human eye cells treated with the antioxidants *lutein* and *zeaxanthin* showed less damage after UV exposure.

Clot Retrieval for Stroke

When blood flow to the brain is suddenly disrupted by a stroke, oxygen-starved tissue rapidly begins to die. Stroke is a killer, accounting for nearly 2,000 deaths yearly in Connecticut.

Sudden confusion, visual disturbances, dizziness, unusual headache, numbness or weakness—especially on one side of the body—may signal the onset of a stroke. One of every three or four patients dies from their stroke during the first several days or weeks.

Until 1996, when the FDA approved the clot-busting drug “tPA,” no proven effective therapies for acute stroke existed. Now Hartford Hospital physicians are using new catheter-delivered devices to directly dissolve or remove clots in brain arteries—similar to the way cardiologists open up heart vessels during heart attacks. The Stroke Center at Hartford Hospital was the first Primary Stroke Center certified by the Joint Commission Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) in New England. While nationally at most four percent of stroke patients receive tPA therapy, the Stroke Center treats roughly 20 percent of all stroke patients with drugs or devices to improve their immediate outcomes.

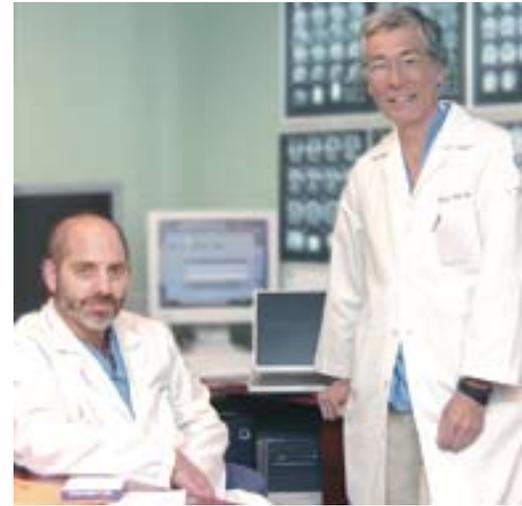
“The chief reason patients don’t qualify for treatments is that they get to the hospital too late to benefit—time is critical,” says Gary Spiegel, M.D., the head of interventional neuroradiology and a co-medical director of the Stroke Center and a member of Jefferson X-Ray Group. “We must educate people to call ‘911’ instead of their physician’s office if they think they’re having a stroke. Now that treatments are available, we need to improve the public’s awareness about stroke symptoms.”

While tPA has a three-hour treatment window, newer devices may be effective up to eight hours. The Stroke Center

is pioneering a revolutionary mechanical device shaped like a tiny corkscrew that can be threaded through a catheter to retrieve the clot. The Stroke Center at Hartford Hospital was the third-leading enrollment site nationwide in the pivotal MERCI Trial that led to this device’s approval by the FDA as the first for removing clots from brain vessels during stroke.

The MERCI device is introduced via an incision in the groin, then snaked up through arteries to the brain. “A guidewire tip has an inflatable balloon that is expanded to seal off the vessel while the device wraps around the clot and pulls it back, much like uncorking a bottle of wine,” explains Stephen Ohki, M.D., assistant chairman, Department of Radiology and director, Section of Vascular/Interventional Radiology.

“This device is the most exciting development over the past decade for acute stroke, pushing the envelope for other new treatments,” adds Isaac Silverman, M.D., co-medical director of the Stroke Center and the lead investigator of the MERCI device at Hartford Hospital. “The patients we select for this therapy would otherwise have an overwhelming likelihood of dying or suffering severe lifelong disability from their strokes. Turning around the life of such a patient in those first few hours is the best feeling I’ve had as a physician.”



Dr. Gary Spiegel (left) and Dr. Stephen Ohki

Rx Risk

Grapefruit juice can interact with many prescription medications, causing potentially serious side effects or reducing the effectiveness of lifesaving drugs. People often overlook the very real dangers listed on a medication’s “drug-food interaction” label, warns the *American Journal of Nursing*. Common drugs that interact with grapefruit juice include Allegra, Coumadin, Lipitor, Tamoxifen, Tegretol, Viagra, Xanax and Zoloft, among many others.

Change of Heart

In a University of South Florida study, stem cells from human umbilical cord blood reduced heart attack damage in rats. The stem cells greatly reduced the amount of heart damage and restored nearly all of the heart’s pumping function. It’s not known whether the stem cells transform into new heart muscle cells or secrete growth factors that trigger the heart to repair itself.

Gene Dream

Scientists envision someday treating Alzheimer’s disease with gene therapy. Researchers at California’s Salk Institute found that gene delivery of a human protein called apolipoprotein E2 (apoE2) reduced amyloid-beta deposits, a telltale sign of Alzheimer’s disease, in mouse brains. Studies show that people with apoE2 seem to be protected against Alzheimer’s disease, while those with apoE4 are more likely to develop the disease.

Cat Concern

Pregnant women should avoid the cat litter box, home to *Toxoplasma gondii*, a parasite that can cause birth defects or miscarriages. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warn that about 60 million Americans have contracted toxoplasmosis during their lives, and 3,000 women transmit the infection to their fetuses each year. Cats fed only canned or dried food and kept indoors pose low risk.

Headaches Happen

Throbbing pain can strike anywhere in the skull, although headaches often start in the back of the neck or head. Some people experience blinding, pounding pain from chronic migraines, while others feel excruciating pressure across the forehead or behind the eyes.

Particularly perplexing is a sudden, dramatic headache that can signal a cerebral hemorrhage or a life-threatening aneurysm. “As physicians, we honor what people tell us about their own headaches,” says Stephen Conway, M.D., a Hartford Hospital neurologist. “We worry less about a recurring pattern of headache symptoms over many years, and more about an atypical headache that suddenly comes out of nowhere.”

Headaches result from irritation or inflammation of nerves in the blood vessels, muscles, and lining of the brain. Stress, tension, fatigue, lack of sleep, allergies, hormones, poor lighting, food additives, alcohol, caffeine and cigarettes can cause headaches.

Tension headaches cause dull, steady pain on both sides, while migraines and cluster headaches trigger intense, throbbing pain on one side of the head, along with nausea, vomiting and sensitivity to light and sound.

Stanford University researchers found that newer drugs are not more effective than ibuprofen, naproxen or any of the other older non-prescription painkillers called nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), a class of drugs that includes aspirin. Dr. Conway warns that NSAIDs like Excedrin and ibuprofen can cause “analgesic rebound,” which worsens headache pain, while overuse of barbiturates can lead to addiction.

“Aspirin is not for chronic headaches,” says Dr. Conway. “Tylenol won’t bother your stomach—if it works. While over-the-counter drugs are safe for occasional use, sufferers should seek emergency treatment if a blinding, unusual headache comes on suddenly.”

Headache Helpers

Over-the-counter pain relievers include aspirin, acetaminophen, and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen or Naproxen. All relieve mild pain, fever and body aches; aspirin and NSAIDs also reduce joint and muscle inflammation.

(Information is for adults only.)

Name	<i>Aspirin (salicylate)</i>	<i>Acetaminophen</i>	<i>Ibuprofen</i>	<i>Naproxen</i>
Brands	Ecotrin, Bayer, St. Joseph	Tylenol, Anacin 3, DatriL, Panadol	Advil, Motrin, Nuprin	Aleve, Naprosyn
What For	Mild to moderate pain, joint pain, inflammation and fever	Headache, body pain or fever	Pain, fever, inflammation and menstrual cramps	Pain, fever, inflammation and menstrual cramps
Effects	NSAID, analgesic, non-narcotic, antiplatelet	Pain reliever; does not irritate the stomach lining.	NSAID, fever reducer, pain reliever	NSAID, fever reducer, pain reliever
When	Works within an hour. (Coated Ecotrin may take longer.) Lasts 4 to 12 hrs.	Works within an hour. A 750-milligram dose lasts up to 6 hours.	Works in 1-2 hours; lasts 5-10 hours.	All-day pain reliever.
Dosage	Two 325-mg tablets, 3-4 times daily, not to exceed 12 tablets a day; 81-mg daily to prevent heart attack and stroke	Two 325-mg tablets 3-4 times daily, not to exceed 8 to 12 tablets (or 4,000 milligrams) in 24 hours. Two extra-strength (500-mg) tablets every 4-6 hours, not to exceed 8 in 24 hours.	One 200-mg tablet every 4-6 hours; not to exceed 6 tablets (or 1,200 milligrams) in 24 hrs.	One 220-mg tablet every 8-12 hours. Do not exceed 660 milligrams in 24 hours.
Warnings	May upset stomach; possible allergic reactions, asthma; do not take before surgery; do not take with steroids or with drugs for cancer, diabetes, or arthritis. <i>Not for children.</i>	Least likely to cause side-effects. Do not use if you have liver problems or drink more than three alcoholic beverages daily.	Possible stomach irritation taken regularly; heavy drinkers and those with gastrointestinal or kidney problems should consult a physician before using NSAIDs.	See Ibuprofen.

Compulsive Hoarding



Keeping Secrets, and Everything Else, Too

Dr. Tolin's lecture, *Dirty Little Secrets: Compulsive Hoarding, Saving and Collecting*, will take place in Glastonbury on April 5 and in Avon on April 19. (See Calendar *Special Events*.)

How would you feel if you could never invite friends or family over because your home was filled with junk? If your house was so cluttered that you couldn't sleep in the bed or cook on the stove? If your living space were filled with unwashed dishes, tattered newspapers, fast-food wrappers and dog poop?

Recently, David F. Tolin, Ph.D., director of the Anxiety Disorders Center at The Institute of Living, appeared on The Oprah Winfrey Show to talk about the psychiatric disorder known as compulsive hoarding. Oprah hired Kim Woodburn and Aggie MacKenzie, from Lifetime TV's show, *How Clean Is Your House*, to scrub a home from top to bottom. Sadly, disorder soon took over again.

No one would ever guess that Oprah's guest, the stylish woman with the neat suit and a diamond brooch, lives in squalor. "People with compulsive hoarding are prisoners in their own homes," explains Dr. Tolin. "Many suffer from a deep sense of guilt and shame, but they're trapped by their depression, perfectionism and mental chaos."

Researchers estimate that up to one-half of one percent of the population suffers from compulsive hoarding, but the actual number may be much higher. "Family members and friends often don't understand that compulsive hoarding is a mental illness," says Dr. Tolin. "They ask, 'Why don't you just clean up?'"

People usually start hoarding during childhood or early adolescence, although the problem usually doesn't become overwhelming until adulthood. Although many researchers believe compulsive hoarding is a type of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), it may also be related to impulse control disorders, depression, social anxiety, bipolar disorder or certain personality traits. Medications that work for OCD don't work as well for compulsive hoarders, although antidepressants sometimes help.

"Brain scans of compulsive hoarders making decisions about discarding things show activity in the part of the brain that activates when someone is making a mistake," says Dr. Tolin. "Their brains are telling them not to throw things away. It's usually not a pleasure response—they're not getting a thrill like an impulsive shopper."

Compulsive hoarders feel a strong sense of emotional attachment toward their possessions and become upset about making decisions to discard things. Often they hoard things they don't want or need. "Many are afraid of throwing away treasures," explains Dr. Tolin. "There's early evidence to suggest that people can be helped by cognitive-behavioral therapy, a form of counseling that goes beyond talking. The therapist visits the home to help the person regain control and learn how to make decisions about what to throw away."

Recently, firefighters called to an early morning blaze were hindered by clutter as they desperately tried to battle a fire raging through a suburban residence. "Compulsive hoarding is a 'dirty little secret,' that people try to conceal," warns Dr. Tolin. "Many compulsive hoarders face a very real risk of losing their homes."

Dr. Tolin is enrolling patients in a trial of cognitive-behavioral therapy for compulsive hoarding, as well as a non-treatment trial to help scientists learn more about compulsive hoarding. For more information, call (860) 545-7685.

Grilled Marinated Vegetables



Accessories courtesy of the Hartford Hospital Auxiliary Gift Shop.

The "Mediterranean diet" appears to reduce the risk of coronary disease in people who replace saturated fat with olive oil. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) says "limited and not conclusive" evidence suggests that a couple of tablespoons of olive oil containing monosaturated fat may reduce the risk of coronary heart disease if it replaces a similar amount of saturated fat. The FDA has changed its stance on low-fat foods, recognizing that some fats are key ingredients in a healthy diet.

"Olive oil appears to be protective against heart disease," says Ann Zogbaum, MS, RD, CND, a clinical dietitian at Hartford Hospital's Helen and Harry Gray Cancer Center. "This recipe offers a quick and easy way to make healthful vegetables tasty and appealing."

Researchers are hoping that olive oil might potentially be protective against breast cancer. A recent series of laboratory experiments on breast cancer cells at Northwestern University's Feinberg Medical School showed that oleic acid, found in olive oil, dramatically cuts the levels of a cancer-promoting gene. Over-expression of the gene occurs in highly aggressive tumors that strike more than 20 percent of breast cancer patients.

Zesty Garlic Marinade

- ¼ cup water
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 tsp. white vinegar
- ½ tsp. sesame seed
- ½ tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- ¼ tsp. paprika
- ¼ tsp. chopped, fresh parsley
- ⅛ tsp. salt
- 1 clove chopped garlic

Place all ingredients in a one-gallon resealable plastic food storage bag. Seal bag and shake until ingredients are well mixed.

Vegetables

- 6 new potatoes (red-skin) cut into quarters
- ½ pound asparagus
- 1 bunch green onions
- 1 large portabella mushroom, cut into ¾-inch slices
- 1 large red pepper, cut into quarters
- 1 small to medium zucchini, cut into ½-inch slices
- 1 small to medium yellow summer squash, cut into ½-inch slices
- 2 plum tomatoes, sliced

Place potatoes on microwavable plate. Cover loosely to vent steam. Microwave on high 5 minutes. Place potatoes and remaining ingredients in bag with marinade. Seal bag and refrigerate for 30 minutes. Grill vegetables or place under broiler 6–8 minutes, turning once until vegetables reach desired doneness. *(Makes four one-cup servings.)*

Serving size: 1 cup
 Calories: 140
 Fat: 10 grams
 Cholesterol: 0 grams
 Protein: 6 grams
 Carbohydrates: 10 grams

Vitamin A: 66%*
 Vitamin C: 100%
 Calcium: 6%
 Iron: 18%
 Folic Acid: 24%
 Magnesium: 18%

* Percent of Daily Value