Inside

Organic Goes Corporate. The new organic labeling has unleashed some outrageous offerings.

Tainted Produce. An environmental group ranks the most (and least) contaminated fruits and vegetables.

Morning Meal in a Bowl. Make Mom happy; eat hot cereal, a fiber bargain if you choose carefully.

Relieving Dry Mouth. Combating inadequate or thick saliva, often due to medications or cancer treatment.

Cholesterol-Lowering Grain. Barley is just as good—just not as famous—a cholesterol buster as oats.

Just In

Frying Oil Linked to High Blood Pressure

Reusing frying oil increases the risk of high blood pressure, according to a recent study from Malaga, Spain. But chalk up another benefit of olive oil, which did best in the study.

The researchers randomly sampled and analyzed cooking oil from 538 homes. They analyzed it for nonvolatile breakdown compounds that are formed during frying and are absorbed by the food and thus consumed. They compared the amount of breakdown products in the oils to several health indices of the adults in those homes.

The results showed a direct link between the intake of these breakdown products and high blood pressure. The risk was greatest in those families who used sunflower oil and least in those who cooked with olive oil, which tends to be more stable when heated, say the researchers. The monounsaturated fats in olive oil are also credited with beneficial effects on blood pressure.

Vitamin A: New Research Finds Bones Benefit From Less Retinol

Part 1 of a six-part series on key vitamins.

Vitamin A hasn’t been in the forefront of nutrition concerns in recent years. Vitamins C and E and folic acid have garnered more attention. But vitamin A is back in the news, and it’s not all good.

Vitamin A is essential for keeping your eyesight keen, your skin silky smooth and your immune system in tip-top working order. But scientists have long known that too much A can accumulate in the liver, causing problems. Only recently have researchers uncovered a link between excessive vitamin A—specifically retinol—and weak bones.

This potential peril to bone health may even spur a wholesale change in what’s in your multivitamin. EN takes a fresh look at the latest facts.

How Real the Risk of Too Little? A frank deficiency of vitamin A—and the resulting night blindness—is rare in the U.S., thanks to fortification of such foods as milk and margarine. But even today, people who eat very limited diets and don’t take a daily multi are vulnerable, if only for a borderline deficiency. And because vitamin A is a fat-soluble vitamin, anyone with a condi-

(continued on page 4)

Don’t Take Your Drinking Water For Granted, Experts Caution

Every day more than 240 million Americans turn on their taps to drink, bathe and cook. For healthy adults, the water that comes out of the faucets is generally safe, but that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t take steps to make it even safer. All it takes to sicken hundreds of thousands of people is a single outbreak, like the 1993 Cryptosporidium incident in Milwaukee.

For the very young, the very old, pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems from cancer treatment or AIDS, drinking contaminated water can be especially dangerous. What are your chances of falling ill from simply turning on the faucet?

Safe, But Safe Enough? “Most municipal water is modestly acceptable and poses no serious health risk to the general public,” says Erik Olson, Senior Attorney at the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) in Washington, D.C., “but we could do better.” Doing better, according to the NRDC, means looking at contaminants that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) currently ignores.

“Many contaminants, from personal care products to household products to pharmaceuticals, are simply not regulated,” says Olson. “Take perchlorate, an ingredient in rocket fuel, fireworks and some fertilizers, which is estimated to be in more than 20 million people’s drinking water from seeping groundwater. It doesn’t—and can’t—violate health codes because there is no standard for it.”

MTBE (methyl tertiary-butyl ether), a gasoline additive, is another contaminant yet to even make the EPA list. No one can say for sure if these chemicals are dangerous, but they certainly don’t belong in the water we drink.

For other substances, argues the NRDC, EPA sets the limits too high. Such was the case for arsenic, whose standards the EPA recently lowered from 50 parts per billion (ppb)—a level first established way back in 1942—down to 10 ppb. However, the new

(continued on page 6)