

An alternative to appendectomies?

For non-emergency appendicitis attacks – known as “uncomplicated acute appendicitis” – appendectomies may be supplanted by antibiotics, according to a study published in *JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association*.

The Finnish study tracked 530 patients between 18 and 60, *The Independent* reports. Participants agreed to be randomly assigned to either antibiotic or surgical treatment for their appendicitis. Seventy-five percent of the 257 people who received antibiotics “recovered easily and did not require surgery.” The antibiotics were found to effectively counter inflammation of the appendix.

“This is quite a radical change in the line of thinking, because appendectomy has served patients well for over 100 years,” says Paulina Salminen, the study’s lead author.



Living Well is designed to provide general information. It is not intended to be, nor is it, medical advice. Readers should consult their physicians when they have health problems.

Every breath you take

For those with COPD, the struggle is daily and impossible to ignore.



BY MICHELLE GIBEALT TRAUB

We take approximately 20,000 breaths per day. Breathing typically comes so easily that we don’t even notice it taking place. But for millions of Americans with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), the daily struggle to get enough oxygen is impossible to overlook.

COPD refers to several lung disorders, including bronchitis and emphysema. Its main characteristic is a difficulty in breathing that reduces the amount of oxygen able to enter the body. Symptoms include shortness of breath, tightness in the chest, frequent coughing (often with mucus) and wheezing.

In 2011, 15 million Americans were reported to have COPD, the third-leading cause of death in the country. Yet many more individuals have difficulty breathing, which leads some health professionals to believe that as many as 24 million people actually live with the disease.

The majority of patients with COPD have smoked at some point in their lives. Smoking or inhaling other air pollutants or

chemicals damages tissues in the lungs responsible for taking in oxygen and releasing carbon dioxide. When lung tissue is damaged, mucus builds up, hindering airflow while driving the diaphragm to contract in an attempt to expel the sticky substance. This results in the chronic and often painful cough common in lung disease.

Unfortunately, once lung tissue is damaged it can’t be repaired. Avoiding smoke and air pollution is the only known way to prevent COPD, and quitting as soon as possible is the only way to halt the disease’s progression.

Treatment options for COPD focus on minimizing further lung inflammation, supporting the airways and thinning mucus so that breathing is easier. Medications are often utilized. Some individuals also require supplementary oxygen delivered via a tank.

Pulmonary rehabilitation programs help patients navigate the challenges of living with lung disease. Such programs teach patients how to conserve their energy levels and maximize their

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Fat fighters

Trying to fight belly fat? WebMD's Katherine Brooking points to four key ingredients to include if you want to win the battle of the bulge.

■ **High-fiber foods** – including whole grains, legumes, fruits and vegetables – help you feel fuller longer. Also, research indicates that adults with high-fiber diets have less belly fat than those with low-fiber diets.

■ **Monounsaturated fats** (MUFAs) are found in canola oil, avocados, olives, nuts and seeds. They can have a positive effect on abdominal fat. "Studies reveal that replacing saturated fats (fats found in whole dairy products, butter, cheese and red meat) with monounsaturated fats can induce a small but significant loss of body weight and fat mass,

without a significant change in total calorie or fat intake," Brooking says.

■ **Probiotics** – bacteria with numerous health benefits – improve gastrointestinal function and strengthen the lining of the intestines. "Not only are probiotics beneficial for your gut bacteria, they may help fend off belly fat. In a 2010 Japanese study, 87 overweight participants took either a *Lactobacillus* probiotic or a placebo. After 12 weeks, the probiotic group reduced abdominal fat by 4.6 percent and overall body fat by 3.3 percent."

■ **Vitamin D** helps regulate abdominal fat mass, "specifically helping to reduce visceral fat (deep abdominal fat) in obese adults." In addition, low levels of vitamin D are associated with increased fat in the muscle of otherwise healthy

young women.



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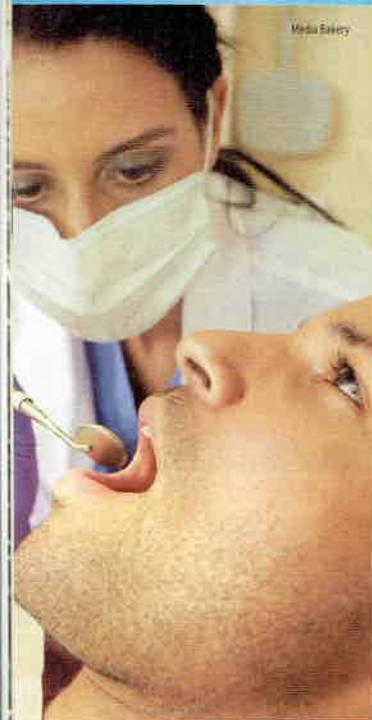
Healthy Mouth initiative brings free oral care to veterans

Like millions of other Americans, some veterans struggle to find oral health care when they need it, due to a lack of dentists in their area, availability or insurance coverage.

Recognizing this need, national dental-practice chain Aspen Dental is seeking to bridge the gap through its Healthy Mouth Movement, a community-giving initiative to deliver free dental care and oral health education to veterans.

Since April, the initiative has served hundreds of patients nationwide on a 42-foot MouthMobile, and more than 3,500 patients during a national day of service June 27, the largest single-day oral-health initiative for veterans. It continues this fall, with another national MouthMobile tour across 12 states.

🌐 www.healthymouthmovement.com



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oxygen intake. Special breathing techniques can help improve breathing efficiency.

Proper nutrition is also vital in managing the disease. Clarisa Webster, clinical dietitian at Yale-New Haven Hospital, says, "Small, frequent, high-calorie meals and snacks are recommended for people with COPD, because it takes more energy for them to breathe and they often have trouble maintaining a healthy weight."

Webster suggests that patients drink plenty of non-caffeinated beverages to thin mucus. Many nutrition experts also advise patients to avoid other things that can cause bloating and pressure on the lungs, such as excess sodium.

Digesting carbohydrates tends to require more oxygen. Therefore, limiting them by avoiding foods that contain added sugars can make breathing more efficient. Basing meals around high-quality protein and healthy fats may help meet nutritional needs while minimizing breathing challenges. Consuming antioxidant-rich foods such as deeply colored fruits and vegetables may also be beneficial to patients with COPD.

Everything we do requires oxygen. So if you or a loved one is having trouble breathing or experiencing a chronic cough, immediately seek the assistance of a trusted health professional. They can help you regain the oxygen you need.

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