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Definitive Answers To 20 Of Your Biggest Health Questions

Does olive oil prevent heart disease? Short answer: Yes

The health benefits of olive oil come from the presence of polyphenols, antioxidants. That reduce the risk of heart diseases and cancers. But to get these healthy compounds, consumers should buy good-quality, fresh “extra-virgin” olive oil, which has the highest polyphenol content

Do cough syrups work? Short answer: No

The majority of over-the-counter cough medicines don’t actually work. These colourful syrups typically contain doses of codeine and dextromethorphan that are too small to be effective. Only cough suppressants that contain older antihistamines seem to relieve coughs.



Do sugary soft drinks lead to diabetes? Short answer: Yes

One or more sugary drinks per day increased their risk of developing type 2 diabetes by 83% compared to those who consumed less than one of these beverages per month.

Do I need sunscreen with more than 30 SPF? Short answer : No

Sunscreens with an SPF (sun protection factor) of 30 block about 97% of ultraviolet rays, while sunscreens with an SPF of higher than 30 block 97%-98%.

Is the MSG in Chinese food likely to give you a headache? Short answer: No

The misconception spawned from several poorly-done small studies in the 1960’s that seemed to connect MSG with a variety of maladies that people experienced after eating at Chinese restaurants.

Do nuts make you fat? Short answer: No

As much as 75% of a nut is fat. But eating fat doesn’t necessarily make you fat. The bigger factor leading to weight gain is portion-size. Luckily, nuts are loaded with healthy fats that keep you full. They’re also a good source of protein and fiber.

Is walking as effective as running? Short answer: Yes



Running is a more efficient form of exercise, but not necessarily better for you so long as the same amount of energy was expended.

Is drinking fruit juice as good for you as eating fruit? Short answer: No

Calorie for calorie, whole fruit provides more nutritional benefits than drinking the pure juice of that fruit. That’s because when you liquefy fruit, stripping away the peel and dumping the pulp, many ingredients like Fiber, calcium, vitamin C, and other antioxidants are lost.

Are all wheat breads better for you than white bread? Short answer: No

Not all wheat breads are created equal. Wheat breads that contain all parts of the grain kernel, including the nutrient-rich germ and fiber-dense bran, must be labeled “whole grain” or “whole wheat.” Some wheat breads are just white bread with a little bit of caramel coloring to make the bread appear healthier,

Can a hot tub make me sick? Short answer: Yes

Hot tubs — especially ones in spas, hotels, and gyms — are perfect breeding grounds for germs. The water is not hot enough to kill bacteria, but is just the right temperature to make microbes grow even faster.

Does coffee cause cancer? Short answer: No

More recently, health studies have swung in favor of the caffeinated beverage. Coffee has been linked to a lower risk of type 2 diabetes, Parkinson’s disease, liver cancer, and even suicide.

Do eggs raise cholesterol levels? Short answer: No

Although egg yolks are a major source of cholesterol — a waxy substance that resembles fat — researchers have learned that saturated fat has more of an impact on cholesterol in your blood than eating foods that contain cholesterol. “Healthy individuals with normal blood cholesterol levels should now feel free to enjoy foods like eggs in their diet every day,”

Can you drink too much water? Short answer: Yes

It is very rare for someone to die from drinking too much water, but it can happen. Over-hydrating is most common among elite athletes. Drinking an excess of water, called water intoxication, dilutes the concentration of sodium in the blood leading to a condition known as hyponatremia.

Can yogurt ease digestive problems? Short answer: Yes

Our digestive tract is filled with microorganisms — some good and some bad. Yogurt contains beneficial bacteria, generically called probiotics, that helps maintain a healthy balance. Probiotics can relieve several gastrointestinal problems, including constipation and diarrhea.

Do whitening toothpastes whiten teeth more than regular toothpastes? Short answer: No

Whitening toothpastes usually contain peroxides and other strong abrasives that might make your teeth appear whiter by removing stains. Unlike at-home whitening strips and gels that contain bleach, these toothpastes do not actually change the color of your teeth.

Is it safe to microwave food in plastic containers? Short answer: Yes

But the plastic container should display the words “microwave safe.”

This means that the Food and Drug Administration has tested the container to make sure no chemicals used to make the plastic leech into foods during microwaving. If chemicals do seep out into food, the amounts are tiny and not dangerous to our health.

Can watching TV ruin your eyesight? Short answer: No

Watching TV will not destroy your rods and cones as the outdated myth suggests. Before the 1950’s, TVs emitted radiation that could increase an individual’s risk of eye problems after excessive TV viewing. Modern TVs have special shielding that blocks these harmful emissions.

Is red wine better for you than white wine? Short answer: Yes

Red wine contains much more resveratrol than white wine, an antioxidant found in the skin of grapes that has been shown to fight off diseases associated with aging.

Is bottled water better for you than tap water? Short answer: No

Bottled water is no safer or purer than tap water, although it is substantially more expensive.

A recent study by Glasgow University in the U.K. found that bottled water is actually more likely to be contaminated than water from your faucet because it is less well-regulated. Bottled water and tap water typically come from the same sources — natural springs, lakes, and aquifers.

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11 Amazing Anti-Aging Foods!

Some people will try anything to look younger, but what many don't know is that you don't need expensive creams or surgeries to achieve the look you want. There are a number of natural ways to look younger that work better from the inside out. Make these foods part of your diet and you will get to know a more energetic and smoother you

Kiwi

Kiwis are packed with vitamin E, which helps protect cell membranes and guards against collagen damage to the skin by UV rays. Eat this sweet fruit by itself or in a delicious fruit salad.

Oysters



What is known as an aphrodisiac food, or a food meant to spur your sexual arousal actually has miraculous anti-aging effects. Oysters are nature's most concentrated form of zinc, a nutrient accredited with maintaining the collagen that keeps the skin firm. Zinc also plays an important role in encouraging the skin-cell renewal process. If you aren't a fan of oysters, you should try to consume turkey instead as it is also rich in zinc.

Salmon

Salmon is a miracle fish and it tastes great! The fish is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, healthy fats that help form a barrier against cell-damaging free radicals that also allow nutrients into the body. Because salmon contains DHA, a form of omega-3 known to enhance your immune system and fight against skin cancer, it is a healthy and useful food to add to your anti-aging diet.

Brazil Nut

Brazil nuts have a number of outstanding benefits, one of them being their anti-aging properties. Brazil nuts have the highest selenium content of any food, which is good because this antioxidant inhibits aging by protecting the skin's elasticity and reversing sun damage. Brazil nuts are now relatively easy to find, and can be eaten plain or added to a salad.

Whole Grains

It's not secret that whole grains have positive effects on your hair and your skin. Whole grain cereal is fortified with B vitamins, like folate, B6 and B12, which are important for maintaining the luster and shine of your hair. They work by setting off the production of red blood cells, which carry oxygen and nutrients to your scalp and hair follicles. If you are not getting enough vitamin B, your hair may experience breakage, slow growth or even hair loss.

Butternut Squash

This delicious sweet and natural treat can be very good for you! Butternut squash contains beta carotene, usually found in orange-hued vegetables like sweet potatoes and carrots, which encourages hair growth. If you're not getting enough beta carotene, your hair may become dry and lifeless, and you may experience the drying of the scalp or dandruff.

Lean Beef

Eating a piece of lean meat or beef once in a while is a great way to maintain a healthy weight and could keep you looking younger! Lean beef contains keratin, part of the family of proteins responsible for the texture, shine and thickness of one's hair. If you're not getting enough keratin, your hair may look dull, unhealthy, and have a lack of volume.

Green Tea

New research suggests that green tea may actually cure dandruff or itchy, flaking scalp. The study from the Medical College of Georgia suggests that tea may help regulate a protein in your body that controls the life cycle of skin cells, which, when overproduced, could result in dandruff.

Lemons and Lime

Lemons and limes are considered 'high alkaline', meaning that they prevent the growth of harmful bacteria in the mouth. Squeezing one wedge of lemon into your water or your afternoon tea will help neutralize the acidity in your mouth and in your skin, which will goose the production of collagen.

Low-Fat Milk

If you are not drinking milk on a regular basis, you should probably start! Low-fat or full fat milks are a great source of vitamin D, which is important for keeping teeth and jawbones strong. A diet that is lacking in calcium can put you at risk for a number of diseases, such as periodontal disease, in which the gums and tooth enamel begin to erode

Bell Peppers



Bell peppers contain a high degree of vitamin C, which helps to strengthen the blood vessels and the connective tissue that hold your teeth in your jaw. If you are worried about your teeth falling out or becoming weak, make sure that you eat enough of these, and get your daily dose of vitamin C, so that you can wear off a number of dental and other kinds of diseases.

30 SURPRISING ANIMAL FACTS

The Animal world is awe-inspiring and full of surprises, I collected some animal facts that will amaze, amuse & teach you something new. Plus - super cute pictures!!!

- 1. Did you know that Turtles can breath through their anus?!
- 2. If a Squirrel finds a baby squirrel without parents, it will immediately adopt it!
- 3. Bees communicate through a complex dance.
- 4. Did you know that Dolphins actually have specific names for each-other?
- 5. In Japan, Macaques search for lost coins, as they learned to use vending machines!
- 6. Humpback Whales can get a song stuck in their head!
- 7. Did you know that a group of Pugs is called a “Grumble”?
- 8. Baby Chimpanzees will pick up and play with rocks and sticks, pretending they’re babys.
- 9. This surprised me too, but apparently, Rats & Mice are ticklish and can actually laugh!
- 10. Ever seen an excited bunny do this? It’s called a “Binky”...
- 11. So a group of bunnies is called a “Fluffle” and that’s just too adorable!
- 12. Shaved Guinea Pigs look exactly like baby Hippos!

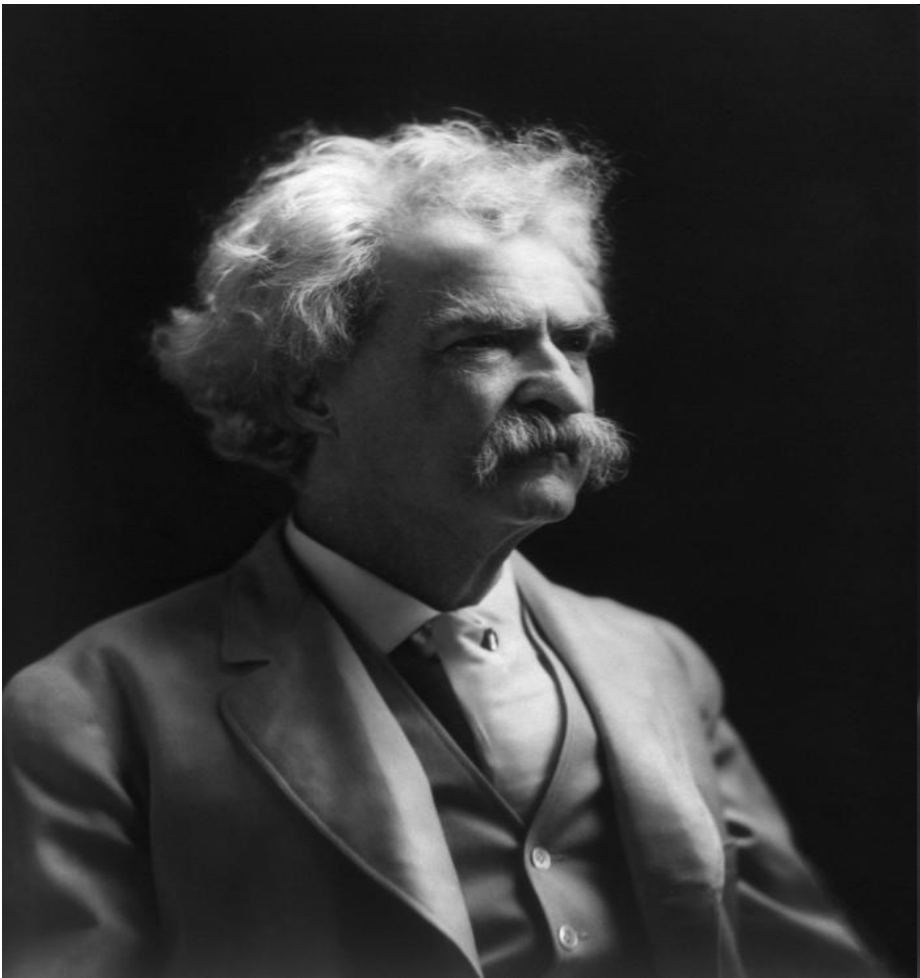


- 13. When passing by another, an ant will bow it’s head in greeting. Aren’t these little fellas polite?
- 14. Did you know that the Norwegian Army has a Knighted Colonel who’s a Penguin?!! his name is Colonel-in-Chief, Sir Nils Olav!
- 15. Goats from different parts of the world actually have different accents!
- 16. Pom-pom Crabs aren’t the ocean’s cheerleaders, they actually pick poisonous anemones and wave them to defend themselves from predators.
- 17. Speaking of Macaques again, when they’re young - these guys make snowballs for fun! (but unlike us, they don’t throw them at eachother...
- 18. Ever seen dogs play around, then suddenly sneeze? That’s how they tell eachother that this is a game and not real aggression.
- 19. Fennec Foxes have extra-hairy feet, they act like snowboots - but for sand, making sure the fox can run faster and doesn’t get burns on their little fluffy feet.
- 20. Sea Horses are amazing! They mate for life and when they swim around, they’ll hold onto their mate’s tail. (Oh, and the males actually get pregnan
- 21. When Otters go to sleep at night, they hold hands so they don’t get separated.
- 22. Does your cat bump it’s head against you? It’s their way of showing that they trust you!
- 23. In Sweden, they have an actual bunny-jumping show, called “Kaninhopping” (Seriously!)
- 25. Cows choose other cows as best-friends and spend all their time together.
- 26. Did you know that when they play, male puppies will let the females win?
- 27. Squirrels hide some of their nuts by burying them, but they’re also forgetful and these forgotten nuts lead to hundreds of new trees each year!
- 28. Did you know that Elephant Shrews are actually related to Elephants, not Shrews?
- 29. You probably heard that Otters use rocks to break-open mollusks, but did you know that they have a “favorite” rock, which they keep in a special pocket made of a skin-flap?
- 30. Wombat poop is square! (but they’re so adorable!)



Great Life Advice From Mark Twain

Mark Twain is considered by many to be one of the greatest American authors in history. He wasn’t only a writer though, he was also a source of constant inspiration, a fountain of memorable quotes and a man with an incredible intellect. So when we say we have some words of advice for you from the mouth of Mark Twain,



there is a very good reason to listen!

- 1. Age is in your mind more than anywhere else.”Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don’t mind, it doesn’t matter.”With this clever play on words, Twain is telling us age doesn’t matter as long as you don’t give it significance. It means that a young soul can dwell in an old body and all the limitations we put on age, other than those physical ones, are actually in our head. This advice isn’t just about age, it’s also about self-confidence. When we believe we have a problem, we transmit that to the people around us and so bring it to pass. People can feel the lack of self-confidence in others and they will treat you as you treat yourself. So, once you make that mental ‘switch’, the enviornment will too.
- 2. Humor is one of the most important things.”Humor is mankind’s greatest blessing.””Against the assault of laughter nothing can stand.”The simple act of laughing and responding to humor is one of the greatest experiences of the human condition. Life is nothing without laughter, just a sad shell.
- 3.Anger will hurt you more than help you.”Anger is an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than to anything on which it is poured.”Anger is an inescapable human emotion; we all get mad once in a while. But there are ways to control out anger, and not let it control us. Just like laughter is transient in nature, so should anger be.
- 4. The world doesn’t owe you, you owe yourselves.”Don’t go around saying the world owes you a living. The world owes you nothing. It was here first.”The feeling of being owned something by the world is common in this generation. We all feel entitled to something, whether it’s a steady job, money, happiness etc. But these feelings usually lead only to frustration, bitterness, anger and resentment. Let go of these expectations from yourselves and from the world, and you’ll see that everything becomes a bit easier. You do deserve the best, but you’ll need to go and get it for yourselves.
- 5. Having a new idea is not a crime.”A person with a new idea is a crank until the idea succeeds.”When you see things differently than other people, expect mixed reactions. Some will support you, others ignore you, while still others will try to bring you down.
- 6. Don’t let your thoughts dwell on the negative.”Drag your thoughts away from your troubles... by the ears, by the heels, or any other way you can manage it.”You must watch your thoughts, because it is so easy to get into a habit of thinking negatively, hashing our worries and troubles over and over in our head, until they seem as big as mountains and as dark as night
- 7. Instead of worrying about yourself, worry about others and help yourself.”The best way to cheer yourself up is to try to cheer somebody else up.”There is something magical about making someone else smile or getting them out of a tough situation. Helping others not only makes us better people and buys us goodwill from those around us, it also makes our own problems seem smaller because we’re not preoccupied with them 24/78. Try everything, regret nothing.”Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn’t do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.”But as we get older, those opportunities become more and more rare, and the things we end up regretting the most are the things we simply never tried to do. Failure shouldn’t scare us, it’s a part of life. What is scarier is having opportunities and never acting on them. So when you think you want to do something - do it. Failure may happen, but at least you’ll know the answer to the question: “What if?”



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The Blonde Gambler...

A beautiful Swedish blonde walks into a Vegas casino and goes straight to the roulette table. She smiles to the two dealers and bets \$20,000 on one spin. "I hope you don't mind," she says in a dreamy voice, "but I feel much luckier naked..." and she peeled off all her clothes, staying completely naked. "Come on, baby, mommy needs a new set of clothes!" The roulette wheel stops on 13. "I won I WON!!!" Shouts the blonde and jumps in the air in excitement She collects the winnings and her clothes, hugs the dealers and disappears. The two dealers looked at each other in shock, until one of them pulled himself together and ask: "Did she bet on 13?" "I don't know," said the other dealer. "I thought you were looking..." Conclusions: 1. Not every gamble relies on luck. 2. Not all blondes are stupid. 3. But men - are always MEN!



Grounds for Divorce

A Polish man married an American girl, and though his English wasn't very good, they got along very well. One day he rushes into a lawyer's office and asks him to arrange a divorce for him. The lawyer says that getting a divorce would depend on the circumstances, and asks him the following questions: "Have you any grounds?" "Yes, an acre and half and nice little home." "No, I mean what is the foundation of this case?" "It made of concrete." "I don't think you understand. Does either of you have a real grudge?" "No, we have carport, and not need one." "I mean what are your relations like? All my relations still in Poland." "Is there any infidelity in your marriage?" "We have hi-fidelity stereo and good DVD player." "Does your wife beat you up?" "No, I always up before her." "Why do you want this divorce?" "She going to kill me." "What makes you think that?" "I got proof." "What kind of proof?" "She going to poison me. She buy a bottle at drugstore and put on shelf in bathroom. I can read English pretty good, and it say:



Gorgeous views of Iguazu Falls!



Iguazu Falls (from the Tupi/Guarani words: "Big Water"), are the waterfalls of the Iguazu River on the border of Brazilian state Paraná and Argentine province Misiones. Below its confluence with the San Antonio River, the Iguazu River forms the boundary between Argentina and Brazil. They are considered the most beautiful falls in the world, at a height of over 80 meters (269 feet) and a width of 2.7 km (1.7 miles).
On November 11 of 2011, Iguazu Falls was announced as one of the seven winners of the New Seven Wonders of Nature by the New Seven Wonders of the World Foundation. We wholeheartedly agree with this decision; this is a place of green magic, of water, rainbows and stunning beauty.
Iguazu has both a Brazilian and Argentinian sides. The waterfalls are shared by national parks on both these countries, with both parks being UNESCO world heritage sites. The Brazilian side may have a slight edge, as there is a beautiful walkway that travellers can take along the canyon.

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NEWS FROM GREECE

Rift appears in coalition over citizenship bill



ANEL leader says his MPs have right to vote according to their conscience

In the first sign of a disagreement within the new SYRIZA-led government, the leader of junior coalition partner Independent Greeks (ANEL), Panos Kammenos, indicated that the party’s 13 MPs would not back a bill granting citizenship to the children of immigrants living in Greece.

Noting that ANEL MPs “are not sheep,” Kammenos said they would vote according to their conscience... as the Constitution dictates.” Meanwhile SYRIZA officials played down the split, indicating that a coalition does not presuppose absolute agreement on everything but respect for democracy. They suggested that the bill was likely to get the backing of opposition MPs. In the countdown to elections, SYRIZA’s Tasia Christodouloupoulou, who is now alternate immigration policy minister, had said all children of immigrants would get citizenship under a SYRIZA government.

A law passed in 2010 which offers citizenship to the children of second-generation immigrants was deemed to partially violate the Constitution by the Council of State. The next government drafted a new law, granting citizenship to the children of immigrants who have completed nine years of studies at a Greek school, completed Greek secondary school education or graduated from a Greek university. The bill did not get to Parliament. Speaking to Kathimerini, the outgoing general secretary of the Interior Ministry, Angelos Syrigos, said he believed the bill would get 250 votes in the 300-seat House.

Urban guerrillas blast Xeros over failed escape



Members of the Conspiracy of the Cells of Fire urban guerrilla group on Tuesday slammed November 17 terrorist Christodoulos Xeros, who was preparing to help them escape until he was caught last month, and labeled him a “disgusting, subhuman fantasist.”

Conspiracy members helped Xeros escape while he was on furlough but the two sides appear to have fallen out over the execution of the planned use of a car laden with 170 kilos of explosives to blow a hole in the wall at Korydallos Prison, facilitating their escape.

Xeros is alleged to have tried to take on a central role in the escape plot, against the urban guerrilla leaders’ wishes.

In their statement, the Conspiracy members also claim that accomplices had conducted test explosions in preparation for the escape.

Passenger traffic at Athens Airport hit new heights in January



On the back of impressive growth recorded last year, Athens International Airport continued to make progress last month.

Passenger traffic increased by 27.9 percent from January 2014 to reach 975,455 people, while domestic traffic jumped by 43.9 percent.

AIA officials attribute this to people opting to fly rather than use other forms of travel as well as to the January 25 general election, as traffic spiked between January 22 and 27.

International traffic also expanded significantly, adding 19.6 percent on an annual basis.

Greece set to ask for extension to loan agreement, sources say

- According to sources close to



the discussions between Greece and the eurozone, the Greek government will submit a request to its lender on Wednesday for its loan agreement to be extended.

Intensive talks between the Greek side and the institutions are continuing.

Prokopis Pavlopoulos, Greek presidential candidate with compromised past

Prokopis Pavlopoulos, who was nominated for the Greek presidency on Tuesday, is a high-profile politician whose career has been tainted by controversy.

The 65-year old has worked



closely with previous presidents as well as serving as interior minister and parliamentary spokesman for the centre-right New Democracy party.

He was accused by critics of filling thousands of public sector jobs with friends and supporters of New Democracy during his stint as interior and public administration minister from 2004 to

2009.

Pavlopoulos’s reputation was hit again by the 2008 riots that broke out on his watch after the death of a 15-year-old Greek student, Alexandros Grigoropoulos, who was shot dead by police in Athens.

More recently, he was criticised for not lifting a finger to help a female lawmaker who was struck in the face by a neo-Nazi politician during a morning talk show in 2012.

But supporters applaud Pavlopoulos’s diplomatic finesse, and say he has already been working on proposals to overhaul the system to elect presidents to stop it effectively serving as a government confidence vote.

It was parliament’s inability to agree on a candidate at the presidential election in December which sparked early elections and ushered in the radical left Syriza party in January.

A moderate, Pavlopoulos boasts ties with Greece’s top statesmen.

In 1974 he served as secretary to former president Michail Stasinopoulos, after the pair become close while the latter was under house arrest during the 1967-1974 military junta.

He was also legal advisor to another former president, founder of New Democracy party Constantinos Caramanlis, between 1990-1995.

A lawyer who studied at University Paris II on a scholarship from the French government, he began working as a lecturer but rose fast to the rank of professor before moving into the political sphere.

Born in Kalamata in southern Greece in 1950, Pavlopoulos is married with three children.

To Potami nominates professor Nicos Alivizatos for president

To Potami on Tuesday nominated Nicos Alivizatos, a professor of constitutional law, as a candidate for Greece’s president.

“Everyone has an obligation to contribute to efforts to deal with the unprecedented problems facing the country,” Alivizatos said after accepting the proposal made by the centrist party’s leader Stavros Theodorakis.



The announcement came after former conservative minister Prokopis Pavlopoulos was named as the government-backed candidate for the largely ceremonial position.

Lawmakers will have three tries — starting Wednesday — at electing a president for a five-year term.

Before and after are very different things By Pantelis Boukalas

A pre-election promise is by its very nature a different thing from a post-election announcement. A promise, by virtue of its timing, is insensi-

tive to political limitations and financial terms. Announcements, on the other hand, must follow the rules of knowledge and measured reflection. They cannot be the product of selfish voluntarism.

The wish, or rather the inclination, to maintain some consistency between a promise and an announcement (which is politically honest and thus less common) has always distinguished political parties: you have the cynical administrators of stagnation, on one hand, and the true reformists that are willing to attempt radical change, on the other.

Such a wish, however, does not mean that politicians should not reflect on facts, taking into consideration those that differ from what they had in mind before the elections. Before the ballot, you have the freedom to act in a vacuum – even if you do not do so all of the time. After, however, doing so would be seen as amoral.

Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras’s comments to Stern magazine that “Greece will be a different country in six months” came only 20 days after SYRIZA was elected to government. As a result, it should be judged not as another maximalist pre-election promise, but as a binding announcement that was made after carefully weighing all the facts: economic figures, the balance of power at home and abroad, and public sentiment.

For the time being, it looks as if Tsipras’s announcement is based solely on the mood of society – judging by the pro-government rallies that look place over the previous days and the popularity of the administration’s stance in negotiations with Greece’s foreign lenders. To be sure, a radical transformation of Greece would require support for all the changes that we would make it a “normal country,” so to say.

That said, no one can deny that Greece needs to change spectacularly in the coming months. It needs to alleviate the pain of the poor, rebuild a welfare state that will cut waste and operate with transparency. It must finally implement a tax system where everyone pays their fair share (and also



Greece bailout: Varoufakis 'willing' as talks collapse

Greece's Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis declared he was ready to do "whatever it takes" to reach agreement over its bailout after the collapse of talks with EU finance ministers. Mr Varoufakis spoke after Greece rejected an EU offer to extend its current •240bn (£178bn) bailout, a plan he called "absurd" and "unacceptable". He said he was prepared to agree a deal but under different conditions.

But the Dutch finance minister said there were just days left for talks. Jeroen Dijsselbloem, who chairs the Eurogroup of finance ministers, said it was now "up to Greece" to decide if it wanted more funding or not. "My strong preference is and still is to get an extension of the programme, and I think it is still feasible," Mr Dijsselbloem told a news conference after the talks collapsed.

Bank could pull the plug on the banks.

If it came to that, it really would mean a major financial crisis, with perhaps the imposition of extensive financial controls to prop up the banks and possibly even the re-introduction of a national currency.

It's hard to nail down a date by which an agreement must be done to avert some sort of financial Armageddon, because it depends on the actions of taxpayers, bank customers and the ECB. But time is getting short.



Key dates for Greece - and the eurozonā. 28 February. Current programme of loans ends. First quarter of 2015 Greece's funding needs estimated at •4.3bn by end of March. 19-20 March. EU leaders' summit. 20 July. •3.5bn bonds held by the European Central Bank mature. 20 August. •3.2bn bonds held by the European Central Bank mature

Greece's current bailout expires on 28 February. Any new agreement would need to be approved by national governments, so time is running out to reach a compromise Without a deal Greece is likely to run out of money.

Mr Varoufakis said there was still "substantial disagreement" on whether the task ahead was to complete the current programme, which Greece's newly elected government has pledged to scrap. He dismissed the promise of "some flexibility" in the programme as "nebulous" and lacking in detail.

Speaking at a news conference after Mr Dijsselbloem, he said he had been presented with a draft communique by Pierre Moscovici, the EU's economics commissioner, which he had been ready to sign. However, that draft had been withdrawn minutes before the meeting started, Mr Varoufakis said.

But he sought to play down the setback as a temporary hitch. "Europe will do the usual trick: It will pull a good agreement or an honourable agreement out of what seems to be an impasse." Two pressing financial issues loom over Greece: whether the government can pay its bills and the stability of the banks.

Greek officials have said the government could keep going for several months, but there are doubts. How long it takes depends to a great extent on Greek taxpayers. The banks have already seen money being withdrawn and increasingly need central bank loans. If there is no bailout programme, the European Central

Before the meeting, German finance minister Wolfgang Schaeuble had already said he was not optimistic a deal would be reached. German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble The German finance minister insists that Greece needs to meet its pre-existing obligations."The problem is that Greece has lived beyond its means for a long time and that nobody wants to give Greece money any more without guarantees," he said. But French Finance Minister Michel Sapin said European leaders needed to respect the political change in Athens. As he arrived in Brussels he urged the Greeks to extend their current deal to allow time for talks.

Refinance Greece has proposed a new bailout programme that involves a bridging loan to keep the country going for six months and help it repay •7bn (£5.2bn) of maturing bonds.The second part of the plan would see the county's debt refinanced. Part of this might be through "GDP bonds" - bonds carrying an interest rate linked to economic growth.Greece also wants to see a reduction in the primary surplus target - the surplus the government must generate (excluding interest payments on debt) - from 3% to 1.49% of GDP. In Greece last week, two opinion polls indicated that 79% of Greeks supported the government's policies, and 74% believed its negotiating strategy would succeed.

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