



Nutrition for Family Living

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February, 2006 Topics

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New information on food labels

By Susan Nitzke

Trans fats. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) now requires trans fat to be listed on Nutrition Facts panels, right after saturated fat. The requirement became effective on January 1 of this year, so it may take a few months for products that list trans fat to show up on store shelves. For more information, including label graphics, see: <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/transfat.html> (in English and Spanish).

Allergens. FDA is also requiring food labels to state the presence of ingredients that contain the following proteins which are the most common triggers of food allergies: Milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, and soybeans. The name of the allergen must be stated in plain English in either the ingredient list or a statement next to the ingredient list. For more information: <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/alrgqa.html>.

Barley. Barley is now one of the foods that can make an approved health claim on food labels. An example of the newly approved health claim is: "Soluble fiber from foods such as [name of a whole barley food or dry milled barley product like barley flour], as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of heart disease. A serving of [name of food] supplies [x] grams of the soluble fiber necessary per day to have this effect." For more information, see: <http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/news/2005/NEW01287.html>.

Is Sugar Addictive?

By Susan Nitzke

Many people find it hard to follow the Dietary Guidelines advice to "choose and prepare foods and beverages with little added sugars...." Some popular authors have even declared sugar to be an addictive substance, but mainstream psychologists and other experts point out that sugar "cravings" do not meet standard definitions of addictions. Researchers at The Pennsylvania State University have a press release to clarify this subject at:

<http://live.psu.edu/story/15346>



Feeding Infants and Toddlers Study (FITS)

By Susan Nitzke and Gayle Coleman

The Feeding Infants and Toddlers Study was conducted in 2002 to determine young children's intakes of food, nutrients, and supplements. The study also looked at feeding practices of caregivers, children's portion sizes, portion size relationships to energy/calorie intakes, nutrient intakes of Hispanic infants and toddlers, and useful applications for caretakers. Data for this study were collected from over 3000 parents and primary caregivers of children 0 to 24 months old. Gerber sponsored the study. The results and methodology for the study have been published in two supplements to the Journal of the American Dietetic Association, January 2004 and January 2006.

Highlights of FITS findings:

- Several articles indicate that family eating practices and the environment influence children's eating behaviors. Parents seem to try to follow expert recommendations, especially in the year after birth. However, as children progress to table foods, the family diet seems to exert more of an influence. For example, between 4 and 14 months, 24 to 39 % of infants consumed orange vegetables such as carrots, sweet potatoes and winter squash. Between 15 to 24 months only about 13 % of toddlers consumed these vegetables. By 15 to 18 months, french fries were the most commonly consumed vegetable.
- Fruit and vegetable intakes were found to be very limited - many toddlers and infants consumed no fruits or vegetables during the day that data were collected for this study.
- Overall, meals and snacks of infants and toddlers tended to be low in whole grains, vegetables and fruits. Meals at day care tended to be more nutritious than meals at home because dairy products were served more often at day care. The young children with more nutritious diets tended to have older mothers, mothers with a college education, and mothers who breastfed them for 6 months or more.
- Supplement users frequently exceeded recommended upper intake levels for vitamin A, zinc and folate.
- Even without considering salt added to foods in the home, both potassium and sodium intakes were above minimal levels (Adequate Intakes) for older infants and sodium intakes were above Adequate Intakes for 12- to 24-month-old toddlers.
- Hispanic mothers more frequently breastfed their 4- to 5-month old infants than non-Hispanic mothers. There were differences in foods consumed by Hispanic infants and toddlers compared to non-Hispanic children. For example, fruits in the Hispanic children's diets were more commonly consumed fresh and soups, rice, and beans were more frequently eaten.

Taken together, the findings suggest the following key points for health and education professionals:

- Encourage women to consume a variety of foods, including fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, during pregnancy, not only to provide adequate nutrients for fetal development, but also to maximize fetal exposure to flavors of a variety and diversity of nutritious foods and beverages
- Promote breastfeeding to foster early infancy exposure to a variety of food flavors.
- Teach parents and caregivers of young children how to recognize the developmental milestones that signal the appropriate time to introduce complementary foods (defined as any energy-containing food that displaces breastfeeding and reduced the intake of breastmilk) into the diets of infants.
- Emphasize the importance of repeated exposures to novel foods and the need for variety and diversity in the diets of infants and toddlers.
- Encourage caregivers to purchase and serve foods with lower amounts of added fat and sugar to promote preferences for more nutrient-dense foods and beverages.



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- Give parents practical information to help them introduce new foods, create a positive feeding environment for their child, interpret and respond to hunger cues, assist children with picky eating and food jags, and generally establish a healthful feeding relationship.

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FAQ: What is FITS? Available at
http://www.gerber.com/content/usa/bin/pdf/press/FITS_FAQ.pdf.



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National School Breakfast Week

By Heather Harvey

This year, **March 6-10 is National School Breakfast Week**. Schools across the country will be highlighting their program and offering breakfast promotions this week. The School Breakfast Program is a federal meal program that operates in 50% of the public and private schools in Wisconsin, serving breakfast to over 73,000 students daily. Just like the National School Lunch Program, breakfast served as part of the School Breakfast Program must meet certain nutritional standards and students can qualify for free or reduced price meals, based on their family's income.

This is the perfect opportunity to promote the importance of breakfast and healthy breakfast ideas to both students and parents, including the School Breakfast Program. There are many ways in which you can do this – newsletter articles, press releases, displays, presentations and lessons are just a few. Below are three websites that can help you plan activities around School Breakfast Week.

WI School Breakfast

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/food/schoolbreakfast/>

School Nutrition Association

<http://www.schoolnutrition.org>

Look under meetings and events.

Eat Smart. Play Hard.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard/collection/Files/BrightIdeasSBPWeek.pdf>

For more information on the School Breakfast Program and how Extension is involved, join us for a Wisline Web on **February 2nd at 1:30-2:30**. To register, visit

<http://www.uwex.edu/ics/wlweg/wlwwelcome.cfm>.



Stress and Weight Gain: Are they Connected?

By Kent Hansen and Sherry Tanumihardjo

Do you eat when you are stressed? Do you feel like stress might be a part of the weight-gain story? Eating when stressed is common and in most cases, a cascade of events led by stress hormones causes a natural reaction to eat. Stress can affect you emotionally as well as physically. When feeling stressed try taking a deep breath by inhaling slowly through your nose and exhaling slowly through your mouth. How does that make you feel?



Why do people gain weight because of stress? Hormonally, the body has a system of checks and balances to deal with long-term stress that actually promotes weight gain. Cortisol, a “stress hormone”, is secreted into the bloodstream and travels throughout the body during times of stress. This is all part of the body’s fight-or-flight response. Along with other hormones, i.e., epinephrine and norepinephrine, cortisol’s main goal is to prepare the body to fight or escape in the short-term or to survive during long-term stress. Unlike the hormones epinephrine and norepinephrine which leave the body quickly after a brief, stressful incident, cortisol remains circulating in your body for some time. During chronic stress, cortisol can remain elevated for days, weeks, or even months. Although stress contributes fundamentally to weight gain over time, stress itself is not the only problem; inappropriate management of long-term stress, resulting in chronically elevated cortisol, is also a problem.

The fight-or-flight response uses an abundance of energy in a short burst so you can physically act appropriately for survival. Part of the goal in preparing the body for fight-or-flight is to stimulate the breakdown of fat, carbohydrate (sugar), and protein so blood sugar levels remain constant and ready to fuel the “burst” of energy needed for action. When your body feels chronically stressed it is constantly preparing for action. One result of this preparation is to stimulate your appetite. Thus, poorly managed chronic stress can lead to increased cortisol levels and a subsequent increase in appetite. Eating more calories than you are expending leads to weight gain, which may cause additional emotional stress. This scenario makes it difficult to shed unwanted pounds. Clearly chronic stress is counterproductive to a healthy body weight.

The bottom line: In general, people respond differently to stress. In reality, some people will respond to stress without any weight gain and others will respond with more weight gain than the average person. Regardless of how your body responds, dealing with stress in a healthy manner will promote overall better health. If you are the type of person who gains weight due to stress, learning healthy stress-management techniques will enable you to manage your weight more effectively. Maintaining a healthy weight is hard enough without stacking the cards against it by ineffectively managing our stress! Recall how that deep breath you took at the beginning of this article felt. Taking deep slow breaths in through the nose, and letting the air out slowly through the mouth is just one of many simple techniques that can reduce stress.



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