



Nutrition News

Feeding the world with knowledge

National Exercise with
Your Child Week:
Aug 6-12th



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Adults Aren't the Only Ones Affected by Obesity

Adolescent obesity is linked to early mortality



Video games, television, computers. Each of these pose health concerns, but increased sedentary time remains a common theme throughout each entertainment mode. Sedentary time is a prominent issue related to obesity, childhood obesity included. Recently, a 45-year study followed the association between body mass index (BMI) of adolescents and cardiovascular diseases and how it affects youth.

BMI is a measure of body fat determined by a height and weight calculation. Based on NIH standards, commonly accepted ranges indicate 18.5-24.9 as normal, 25-29.9 as overweight, and over 30.0 as obese. Teens within the high-normal range (22.0<25.0) have a higher risk of negative cardiovascular outcomes than those in the low-normal end. Yet, teens in the accepted normal range still had an association with non-coronary heart disease and non-stroke cardiovascular outcomes.

That being said, changes to diet, physical activity, and behavior can reduce obesity and BMI in children and adolescents. With the second week of August being "National Exercise With Your Child Week", this leads to an appropriate opportunity to embrace this movement. Combining behavior change efforts with family involvement has been a theory around for many years. But, what these studies have concluded is understanding the adolescent's views about such interventions is extremely important for a healthy lifestyle change.

We want our children and teens to have a healthy, positive life. Physical activity should be enjoyable, fun, and something they look forward to doing. Involving your child in picking the type of activity or a healthy meal to make, will not only get them excited, but leads them to be more likely to follow through given the involvement in choosing the activity.

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- **Roasted Sweet Potatoes with Spinach**

Making healthy choices is a skill of mastery that will last a lifetime and it can start with being a healthy role model yourself. Simply having dinner together lowers BMI in parents and children. So, start the conversation early, have mealtime together, leave the distraction and technology behind. From a dance activity to hopscotch, there are plenty of ways to combine physical activity with fun in August, not to mention stronger bones, better behavior, and improved sleep habits as positive side effects!

Healthy Practices at Younger Ages

Habits stick, make them healthy from the start



Our environment influences much of our daily lives, including self-regulation and dealing with emotions. Learning such skills at a young age is ideal as it correlates to a lower risk of childhood obesity, researchers at the University of Illinois have concluded. How? An overweight child whose parents want them to lose weight cut off certain foods, teaching that child to want more of that food because they cannot have it. Or, a child could be upset and are offered something comforting to snack on leads to an association of eating your feelings. Or, it may be regular conversations that place a negative impact on food which indirectly puts up barriers around restrictive feeding practices, straining the parent-child communication protocol.

But, it may not be just the parenting putting an increased risk of obesity on the child. It could also be genetics. This cycle often evolves from the parents who may struggle with weight management themselves. Longitudinal studies recited that after the parents realized their child may be following in their footsteps, they stepped in to intervene in what they thought would protect their child but instead cultivated a negative relationship with food. The University is examining how body mass index, a child's genotype, in particular the COMT gene and its' responsibility for emotion and cognition, and the way parents respond to food to learn how children will respond to stressful situations.

What the University's researchers are encouraging is to find new strategies to help children relate to their emotions and properly learn to self-regulate. This, in turn, will reduce the restrictive feeding practices and negative associations with food over time. Of course, that is easier said than done. Offering moments of self-reflection, for not only the parent but also the child, whether it be about why they are feeling a certain way or if they are acting out, will allow communication about emotion rather than using food as an unhealthy outlet. Using physical activity as an outlet will help create a sharper mind. Get your kids to be the sous chef in the kitchen as they help make kid-approved [Sunrise Pizzas](#) for breakfast. These are fun ways to help role model to create a positive environment for your child to learn and develop their healthiest self.

Vitamin A for Diabetes

Vitamin A does more than just improve your eyesight



Coined as the vitamin for your eyesight, vitamin A has a new claim to fame. From producing white blood cells to remodeling bone to rejuvenating skin, vitamin A's newest defined role is improving beta cell functioning in diabetics. Early in life, vitamin A does play an important developmental role for beta cells, which leads to proper functioning for fighting inflammation in adult years. Beta cells, which store and release the hormone insulin to help regulate blood glucose levels, have a large cell surface receptor for vitamin A.

Researchers found that when the vitamin A surface on the beta cells was blocked, there was a 30% deterioration of insulin secretion. Essentially, without vitamin A, the beta cells became less inflammation resistant. When the cell becomes completely deficient of vitamin A, it dies. This leads way into understanding both type 1 and 2 diabetes' beta-cells formation from the early stages and how we may intervene.

While we want diabetics to have sufficient vitamin A in their body, too much of a good thing may pose risks. Most concerning is an overdose of vitamin A through supplementation as it may lead to osteoporosis and unwanted side effects within diabetes self-management, furthering our evidence that supplements are unnecessary and potentially harmful. However, exceeding the upper limit through food does not pose risks, yielding another reason to use food as medicine.

The best way to get a healthy dose of vitamin A is through fruits and vegetables. On average, an adult needs anywhere between 700-900 micrograms of vitamin A per day. We often find vitamin A in the orange and yellow foods, noting the beta-carotene we commonly recognize. Carrots, mango, sweet potato, and butternut squash certainly come to mind, but do not discount kale, broccoli or spinach as they also pack a healthy punch of vitamin A as well! These foods will not only help with diabetes, but also bone health. For comparison, a whole sweet potato contains approximately 1,400 micrograms per potato and cooked spinach yields about 570 micrograms per cup. So, it isn't surprising that Dole's [Roasted Sweet Potato with Spinach](#) side dish only has only 10 natural ingredients, yet 690% of your daily needs of food-related vitamin A!

Smart Choice Vitamin C Carrots or Twisted Citrus-Glazed Carrots?

Descriptions of vegetables yield higher consumption



What's in a name? Is it the key to healthier eating? Stanford University tested whether how vegetables are labeled makes a difference, and it does. Each day, vegetables were labeled differently even though how they were prepared remained the same. As the week progressed, the vegetable definition changed from basic (carrots), to healthy restrictive (carrots with sugar-free citrus dressing), to healthy positive (smart choice vitamin C carrots), to indulgent (twisted citrus-glazed carrots).

Diners chose to put the vegetables on their plate. When the vegetables were indulgently labeled, the purchases increased 25% as compared to basic labeling, 41% more than the healthy restrictive and 35% more than the healthy positive labeling. After all, who can resist twisted citrus-glazed carrots?

We cannot help but wonder what if all restaurants or school cafeterias used indulgent labeling *but* used spices and herbs instead of the heavy, indulgent ingredients that are so tempting? We'd be a healthier nation knowing that certain spices provide a calorie-free antioxidant boost for heart health, in addition to less added fat and sugar. As it currently stands, we cannot be so trusting with indulgent labeling as it usually truly is, well, indulgently prepared. Our mind is attracted to descriptive, colorful words, especially when it comes to food. Often times, we do choose what to eat based on the menu or box description even if we know there may be a healthier alternative.

Until our perfectly imagined world exists, be careful when buying into the marketing of the food industry. Code indulgent words to keep on your radar, whether when dining out or in the grocery store, are the following:

- **Fried:** Better known as crunchy, tempura, sizzling, golden, breaded
- **Sugar Loaded:** Better known as teriyaki, sticky, honey-dipped, glazed
- **High Calorie:** Better known as loaded, stuffed, velvety, smothered, rich

Stick with roasted, baked, grilled, steamed, spiced, or seasoned to choose the healthier alternative. Or, just speak up and ask how an item is prepared. Most times a restaurant can prepare a special order and are willing to do so if you simply ask. Not only does it take a while to retrain your taste-buds, it takes a while to retrain your brain's wants. But, in the end it is worth the exercise. Stick with it and go for the actually healthy, indulgently labeled [Italian Stuffed Artichokes](#). Healthy can be indulgent!

Chocolate for Cognition

Brain boosts by cocoa



The saga of “is chocolate good for you” continues. This time we have some good news to share, the flavanols in chocolate boosts your cognition! Combing through previous literature, researchers found that there was improved visual information processing after consumption of cocoa. For the women reading, if you had a tough night sleeping and are suffering sleep deprivation the next day, cocoa actually counteracts the sleep deprivation.

Of course, there were some aspects to take into consideration such as length and mental load of the cognitive tests used, but in the short term cocoa boasted positive outcomes. When looking at long term ingestion, defined anywhere from five days to three months, cognitive performance improved in the elderly who were beginning to experience memory decline. Combine this knowledge with dark chocolate's stress-reducing capabilities and enhanced sports performance, and a healthy dose a cocoa may not be such a bad thing after all!

Flavanols, as a subgroup of flavonoids, are the type of antioxidants found in cocoa. Cocoa flavanols have been found to lower blood pressure and maintain blood vessel health. Flavanols, however, won't necessarily be listed on the food label of the chocolate bar, but when you see percentages on the package, that is your best indicator. That is why dark chocolate typically contains 45-80% cocoa solids in comparison to milk chocolate at 5-7%, making dark chocolate the better choice. Of course, how much chocolate consumed remains cautionary due to the caloric and fat content, but in this case a little goes a long way.

Not a chocolate fan? Flavanols can be found in many healthy foods such as apples, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, greens and many other fruits and vegetables. While this study did not particularly explore cognition factors with these food sources, you can certainly reap the benefits by adding a variety of flavanols into your diet.

Craving chocolate now? Try the [Black Magic Banana Cupcakes](#) for a healthy take with the added benefits of improved brain power with unsweetened cocoa.

Ask Your Muscles

Discovering how your body asks for energy



What you eat is important when it comes to expending muscle energy. Texas A&M researchers are learning how muscles ask for the energy you need throughout the day. Fascinatingly enough, comparing human bodies to fruit flies has led to the discovery of how muscles are utilizing fat storage tissues, which has implications for obesity in humans.

Human metabolism has many varieties. In order to maintain life, a balance of energy store usage is expended throughout the day. While some metabolisms often seem better than others, we are all working to burn fat daily. There are different stores of energy in your body that are called upon based on activity level.

Take a sprinter for example, they use anaerobic pathways in that explosive seconds-long sprint that call upon high capacity and the need for quick energy release. A marathoner on the other hand, constantly is replenishing stores and creating new energy through aerobic metabolism, buying energy from long-term system of the Krebs Cycle.

But how do we get to that point of using energy? The answer is what we put into our body. When we break it down, fat provides 9 calories per gram, protein and carbohydrates 4 calories per gram. For example, if you are reading a food label and the food has 5 grams of fat, then 45 calories of that food are made up of fat in that product. Same goes for protein and carbohydrates, as 10 grams of protein or carbohydrates will yield 40 calories and so on. Therefore, not all calories are created equally.

During the day, we often call upon fats or lipids for higher energy demand since there is more to spare, producing longer term energy. Yet, when we are sedentary or sleeping, this calling upon the lipid storage shuts down, providing evidence leading towards weight gain. What research findings indicated was how the metabolic homeostasis could be manipulated through genetics to alter the amount of lipids we store. Our genes and muscles communicate. We take in fat, store it, then release it for energy, but what if there was a way to regulate that storage and release mechanism? Now that the signaling pathway functionality has been identified, further research will involve what happens when we change our sleep or eating behaviors.

With our circadian rhythm affecting our muscle needs, it is interesting to see where this will lead. In the meantime, finding ways to healthfully burn fat and keep your energy levels high is a challenge for many. Keep up with regular exercise to help ward off chronic disease. Make sure your plate is balanced, including healthy fat, as it helps lower cholesterol. Because, when you avoid fat and don't eat enough, your body actually is counteracting its' natural ability to burn storage for energy. So, get up and get moving!

FEATURED RECIPE

Roasted Sweet Potatoes with Spinach

Ingredients:

- 3 pounds DOLE® Sweet Potato
- ¼ cup plus 2 teaspoons olive oil, divided
- 1 tablespoon dried parsley, crushed
- 1-¼ teaspoons onion salt, divided
- ¾ teaspoon dried basil leaves, crushed, divided
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano, crushed, divided
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 8 ounces DOLE white mushrooms, sliced
- 1 bag (9 oz.) DOLE Spinach



Makes: 10 Servings

Total Time: 40 Minutes

Directions:

1. **PREHEAT** oven to 400 F. Coat large baking sheet with vegetable cooking spray
2. **PEEL** potatoes; cut into 1- to 1-½ inch pieces; place in bowl of cold water. Place ¼ cup oil, parsley, 1 tablespoon onion salt, ½ teaspoon basil, and ¼ teaspoon oregano into gallon-size food-storage bag. Drain potatoes; place in bag and close securely.
3. **VIGOROUSLY** shake bag to coat potatoes. Spread evenly on prepared baking sheet.
4. **BAKE** 30 to 40 minutes or until golden brown, stirring halfway through.
5. **REMOVE** potatoes and place on large serving platter. Heat remaining 2 teaspoons oil in large nonstick pot. Cook garlic until tender; stir in mushrooms and cook over medium-high heat 3 minutes. Add remaining ¼ teaspoon each onion salt, basil and oregano. Stir in spinach; cook and stir another 3 minutes or until spinach is wilted. Spoon over potatoes and mix gently.

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