

Pedal for a Healthier Weight

The United States has a weight problem: More than 2 out of every 3 adults are overweight. Leading health organizations recommend that every adult exercise for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week – as much as 60-90 minutes if they want to prevent weight gain. Yet few people follow these guidelines.

Harvard researchers set out to see if bicycling could help control weight. “Bicycling may be more comfortable than brisk walking, especially for overweight women,” said Ann Lusk, research fellow at the Harvard School of Public Health Department of Nutrition.

The 16-year study showed that for premenopausal women of any weight, riding a bicycle more than 4 hours a week was effective in helping them maintain their weight.



Overweight and obese women appeared to benefit the most. For them, bicycling just 2 or 3 hours a week helped manage weight. The researchers found that for previously inactive women, even a small increase in bicycling time – as little as 5 minutes each day – helped to control weight.

“Small daily increments in bicycling helped women control their weight. But the more time women spent bicycling, the better. Women with excess weight appeared to benefit the most. This is encouraging for women with a weight problem because they could substitute bicycling for slow walking or driving,” said Rania Mekary, a Harvard research associate.

Try bicycling or brisk walking. It’s a great physical activity for you, whether you’re male or female, overweight or a healthy weight, young or old.

Harvard School of Public Health. 2010.

How to Lower Your Cancer Risk

More than 100,000 cancer cases in the United States each year are linked to excess body fat, according to the American Institute for Cancer Research. Researchers have known for some time that being overweight puts people at an increased risk of some types of cancer. This recently released data highlights the extent of the problem.

Cancer Linked to Excess Body Fat

Type of cancer	% of diagnosed cases
Endometrial	49%
Esophageal	35%
Pancreatic	28%
Kidney	24%
Gallbladder	21%
Breast	17%
Colorectal	9%

“If people sustain a normal body weight and remain physically active throughout life, it will have a major impact on cancer incidence,” says Laurence N. Kolonel, MD, PhD, Deputy Director of the Cancer Research Center of Hawaii.

Why does being overweight make a person more susceptible to cancer? Several mechanisms are thought to be at work. Excess body fat appears to increase the amount of hormones, like estrogen, circulating in the body. It can also disrupt how the body processes insulin. Both of those factors have been linked to an increased cancer risk.

In addition, “being overweight creates low-grade inflammation in the body, and there’s a lot of research going on right now that links chronic inflammation to cancer,” says Kolonel.

To reduce your risk, the American Cancer Society recommends that you balance your calorie intake with physical activity. Eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables every day, choose whole grains over processed grains, and limit red meat, if you eat it at all. Adults should also get at least 30 minutes of moderate or vigorous physical activity on at least 5 days each week.

American Cancer Society. 2010.

Keep Your Brain Sharp

If you are like most people, you want to keep your brain working at its best. A new study suggests that getting regular exercise, eating healthfully, and losing weight is the way to achieve that goal.

Researchers at Duke and Emory Universities found that people who follow the DASH diet recommended by the National Institutes of Health showed improvement in memory, learning, and mental quickness, but those who also exercised showed the most improvement.

When you stay or become active, eat healthfully (less meat and saturated fat and more fruits and vegetables), and work to keep your weight down, not only does your body benefit from improved blood pressure, fitness, and heart health, but your brain function improves as well.

Want to do your best, physically and mentally? The message is clear. Be active. Eat well. Maintain a healthy weight.

Hypertension 2010.



Read about the DASH diet: <http://www.wellsources.info/wn/DASH.pdf>



The Bitter Truth about Added Sweeteners

As if you needed it... here's another reason to eat less sugar. Eating a lot of added sugar has already been linked to a higher risk of obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Research now shows that added sugar lowers your HDL cholesterol – the healthy kind. HDL cholesterol is critical to good heart health.

For every 5% increase in added sugar, HDL cholesterol levels fell about 3%. Keep in mind that for every 1% decrease in HDL cholesterol levels, the risk of heart disease increases about 3%.

This validates the recent recommendations by the American Heart Association to limit added sugar to less than 5% of your daily calories. That's about 100 calories per day for women (6 teaspoons of sugar) and 150 calories a day for men (9 teaspoons of sugar).

In 1978, the average sugar intake was 10.6% of total calories eaten. Today the average adult's intake of added sugar is 16% – totaling 20+ teaspoons of sugar a day.

Where is the added sugar coming from? The primary sources are soft drinks, candy, cakes, cookies, ice cream, and pies. One 12-ounce soft drink contains 8-10 teaspoons of sugar. But did you know that fruit punch and fruitades have added sugar? So do sweetened yogurt, cinnamon toast, flavored lattes, and canned fruit packed in syrup. Look for "100% fruit juice" and other unsweetened drinks. Buy fruit canned "in its own juice." Fresh fruit and other whole foods with natural sugars in them are the best choices because they do not increase your health risk. In fact, eating more of these foods makes you healthier.

Journal of the American Medical Association. 2010.

The Journal of the American Society of Nephrology. 2010.

Lower Your Risk of Heart Disease – Even More!

Changing your diet – even a little – can greatly reduce your risk of heart disease.

- **Eat polyunsaturated fats in place of saturated fats** – especially omega-3s (e.g. fish, walnuts, and flax meal). That alone could reduce your risk of heart disease or heart attack by as much as 27%.
- **Eat less salt** – no more than 1,500 mg of sodium per day.
- **Eat more whole grains.** Data from the Nurses' Health Study showed that among women who didn't smoke, those who ate at least 3

servings of whole grains daily had a 50% decrease in heart disease compared to women who seldom ate whole grains.

- **Eat more fruits and vegetables.** Data from the INTERHEART study of 52 nations showed that those who ate the most fruits and vegetables daily had a 30% reduction in heart disease compared to those who ate few fruits and vegetables.

National Institutes of Health. 2010.



Be a Sugar Sleuth

Reading the ingredient label on processed foods can help you identify added sugars. Names for added sugars include:

- Brown sugar
- Corn sweetener
- Corn syrup
- Dextrose
- Fructose
- Fruit juice concentrates
- Glucose
- High-fructose corn syrup
- Honey
- Invert sugar
- Lactose
- Maltose
- Malt syrup
- Molasses
- Raw sugar
- Sucrose
- Sugar
- Syrup

This yogurt contains sugar and high fructose corn syrup, with a sugar content of 27 grams.

USDA MyPyramid. 2010.



ASK THE WELLNESS DOCTOR

- Q:** Is it possible for an athlete to get adequate protein on a vegetarian diet?
- A:** Go to www.wellsource.info/wn/ask-protein.pdf to read the answer from Don Hall, DrPH, CHES.

To ask your question, email: paulaw@wellsource.com, subject line: Ask the Wellness Doctor. Emails with any other subject line will be directed to the spam folder.