Fall In Into Healthy Habits

Change is inevitable as we reluctantly move into the fall season. In addition to the changing color of the leaves, is the changing dynamics of our lives. This inescapable change in nature can have a direct effect on health and fitness if not prepared. Without the extended, warm summer days, there is much less opportunity to live an active lifestyle. So are you still getting enough exercise? Without the fresh, outdoor BBQs, eating habits will change. Are you still enjoying colorful, healthy foods? Being aware of these slight lifestyle changes will enable you to make the fall fitness transition as smooth as possible. The quality of your health and fitness in the fall can also enable you to enter the holiday season with a great baseline, and the strength you need to prevail through a tumultuous November and December.

Stay Active

Don’t be deterred by the cooler temperatures. The same beautiful resources that you enjoyed during the summer are still available to you. Replace shorts and bathing suits with jeans and sweaters and get outside for a walk or bike. Parks, beaches, and even your own street are beautiful in the fall. Appreciate your outdoor environment in its new season while still staying active. Plan to participate in a Turkey Trot 5k or another attainable goal to keep you motivated throughout the fall months. There is an extensive calendar of races that stretch far into the fall and winter seasons. Visit active.com to browse events in our area.

Eat Fresh

As we say goodbye to the fresh summer foods, say hello to the foods of fall. FoodFit.com has a comprehensive list of fall fruits and vegetables, their nutritional content, and exactly how to prepare them. The same way you incorporated fresh, summer foods into carefree outdoor barbecues, try the same with your weekend football get-togethers. Avocado, carrots, and sweet potatoes are among the many that will keep your fall eating habits deliciously in check.

Take a Time Out

Much of the disordered eating and non-activity that comes with the fall and winter seasons are a result of the hectic, and somewhat depressing, lifestyle they can bring. Shorter, colder days can leave time for nothing more than a day of work. This situation can be depressing for most people, or inflict seasonal affective disorder in others. Visit www.nebraskamed.com’s page on seasonal affective disorder to determine when symptoms require a doctor visit. To avoid typical fall and winter blues, be sure to take time to do the things you love. Schedule time for special events, and whenever the weather allows, try to get outside and soak up some crisp fall air.

There is no denying our love for everything summer has to offer. But the fall season presents great beauty, and opportunity to enhance your fitness program. Take advantage of the fall, it can give you a renewed appreciation for food, fitness, and your natural environment.
Solitary Confinement – ‘Like Gasoline on Fire’

National Alliance for the Mentally abbreviated to NAMI. There are many reason that we should support this great agency, but the following s is one of the reasons why supporting NAMI is vital to ensure appropriate health services. People affected with mental illness should be treated with dignity and respect as any other human being.

It was described in a Senate committee recently. Placing inmates with severe mental illness in solitary confinement is “akin to pouring gasoline on a fire,” the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) testified before a Senate committee recently.

“It is an almost sure fire guarantee to lead to a worsening of symptoms,” NAMI Director of Policy and Legal Affairs Ronald Honberg told the Senate Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights. The result is the “worsening of psychiatric symptoms such as paranoia, extreme anxiety and depression, increased suicides and suicide attempts, sleep disturbances, hallucinations and self-mutilation,” he testified.

An estimated 25,000 prisoners live in solitary confinement today, according to a Jan. 8 Washington Post story, many of them with severe mental illness. “America’s new asylums” these cells have been called. A significant proportion of these individuals are estimated to suffer severe mental illness - what we call “trapped three ways.” See our blog, “Trapped three ways: Untreated, behind bars, http://topics.sacbee.com/Human+Rights/ for more details.

Pets for Depression and Health

Can your depression problems improve when you interact with your pet?

Could a kitten’s purr or a dog’s wagging tail help with your depression? It might. "Pets offer an unconditional love that can be very helpful to people with depression," says lan Cook, MD, a psychiatrist and director of the Depression Research and Clinic Program at UCLA.

You Don’t Have to Live With Depression

Studies show that animals can reduce tension and improve mood. Along with treatment, pets can help some people with mild to moderate depression feel better. If you’re depressed, here’s a rundown of how pets could help.

Uncomplicated love. Are your relationships with family and loved ones complicated and frayed? A pet can be a great antidote. “With a pet, you can just feel,” says Teri Wright, PhD, a psychologist in private practice in Santa Ana, Calif. “You don’t have to worry about hurting your pet’s feelings or getting advice you don’t want.”

Responsibility. You might not think you can take care of a pet right now. Taking care of yourself may seem hard enough. But experts say that adding a little responsibility can help. It adds a new and positive focus to your life. "Taking care of a pet can help give you a sense of your own value and importance," says Cook. It will remind you that you are capable -- that you can do more than you might think.

Activity. Are barely getting off the couch these days? You need to get more physical activity. Pets can help. "If you have a dog, that dog needs to be walked," Cook says. A little extra physical activity is good for your physical and mental health.

Routine. Having a daily schedule helps people with depression. An animal’s natural routine -- waking you in the morning, demanding food or walks -- can help you stay on track.

Companionship. Depression can isolate you. It can make you pull back from your friends and loved ones. If you have a pet, you’re never alone. That can really make a difference.

Social interaction. Having a pet can gently push you to get more social contact. You might chat with others while walking your dog at the park or waiting at the vet. Pets are natural
icebreakers and other pet owners love to talk about their animals. Touch. Studies show that people feel better when they have physical contact with others. Pets offer something similar. There’s something naturally soothing about petting a cat on your lap. Studies have shown that petting a dog can lower your heart rate too.

Better health. Research has found that owning a dog can lower blood pressure, reduce stress hormones, and boost levels of feel-good chemicals in the brain. One study of Chinese women found that dog owners exercised more often, slept better, reported better fitness levels and fewer sick days, and saw their doctors less often than people without dogs.

The Drawbacks of Getting a Pet for Depression

Pets aren’t for everyone with depression. If you’re depressed, think carefully before getting a pet. If you have a loved one with depression, don't assume that surprising him or her with a kitten will help. It could make things worse. Here are four things to ask yourself before getting a pet to help ease depression.

Are you comfortable with animals? A lot of people helped by pets had them as children. They’re used to having an animal as a source of comfort. If you've never had a pet, it may be less likely to help now.

Will having a pet make you worry? Dwelling on death is a common sign of depression. If getting a pet just means that you'll worry constantly about it dying, that won't help.

Is your depression too intense right now? “Taking care of a pet is not unlike taking care of a small child.” “If your depression is so severe that you can’t take care of an animal, it’s not a good idea to get one.”

Can you afford a pet? Caring for pets can be expensive. The ASPCA estimates that in the first year, a cat can cost more than $1,000 and a dog up to almost $1,850.

Even if getting a cat or dog isn’t wise right now, other animals could help. Birds can be surprisingly affectionate and cost only $270 a year in care. While you may not want to snuggle with a fish or a turtle, caring for them could also improve your mood. It creates responsibility and a new focus. Studies have shown that watching fish can lower your pulse and ease muscle tension too.

If you think buying a pet is too expensive just call the Nebraska Human Society at: Call: (402) 444-7800 or go online at www.nehumanesociety.org.
Weight loss is the best way to prevent diabetes

NEW YORK - Weight loss is the key factor in reducing diabetes risk for high-risk, overweight individuals, a new study shows. Participants in the intensive lifestyle intervention portion of the Diabetes Prevention Program, which involved cutting fat and calories with the goal of reducing by weight by 7 percent, reduced their likelihood of developing diabetes by 58 percent over a 3-year period, report Dr. Richard F. Hamman at the program's coordinating center at George Washington University in Rockville, Maryland and colleagues.

At the beginning of the study all of the participants were overweight and had an impaired ability to process glucose, putting them at high risk of developing diabetes. Another goal of the intervention was to get participants to exercise moderately for at least 2.5 hours weekly, the researchers add in their report published in the September issue of Diabetes Care.

Hamman and his team looked for factors that were the most important in reducing diabetes risk -- weight loss, exercise or dietary fat reduction. Participants’ cut their fat intake to less than 25 percent of their total calories, and reduced the amount of total calories if their weight-loss goals were not met by fat reduction alone. Weight loss was the most important factor in preventing diabetes, while cutting fat and exercising helped participants lose weight, and exercise helped them keep the weight off, the researchers found. "Interventions to reduce the risk of diabetes should aim at weight loss as the primary determinant of success," the researchers conclude.
Prevent and Control High Blood Pressure: Mission Possible

What every African American should know

Know your numbers

High blood pressure is called “the silent killer” because there are often no symptoms. Your numbers are your only warning.

Normal blood pressure
the pressure of blood in the vessels when the heart beats: systolic pressure

less than 120/80 mmHg

millimeters of mercury
the pressure between beats when the heart relaxes: diastolic pressure

High blood pressure: A force to be reckoned with
High blood pressure (also called hypertension) increases your chances of having a heart attack, heart failure, stroke, kidney disease, and other life-threatening illnesses. Anyone can get it, and as you get older, the likelihood of your developing high blood pressure increases, especially if you are overweight or obese or have diabetes.

African Americans are most likely to develop high blood pressure than any other racial or ethnic group. For African Americans, high blood pressure:
• Tends to be more common and more severe
• Happens at an earlier age
• Is a leading cause of death for people with type 2 diabetes
• Is the major reason why African Americans are 8 times more likely to develop kidney failure than Caucasians
• Is a major reason why African Americans die at an earlier age

The good news is that high blood pressure can be controlled. Better yet, it can be prevented.

Enlist in this vital mission for a healthier you
Breast Cancer Among African American Women in Nebraska

by Shinobu Watanabe-Galloway 2012 04 09

Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers among women in the United States. Per a request from My Sister’s Keeper, the African American breast cancer support and advocacy group, researchers from the College of Public Health at University of Nebraska Medical Center did a study to identify priority issues for African Americans. Here are the main findings:

- African American women are diagnosed with breast cancer at younger age than Caucasian women

  According to Nebraska Cancer Registry data from 1999-2008, the average age of diagnosis among African American women in Nebraska was 59 years compared to 64 years for Caucasian women. In fact, four in ten African American women (41%) diagnosed with breast cancer were younger than 55 years of age, which was a much higher proportion among Caucasian (31%).

- Breast cancer screening can save lives but less than half of African American women aged 40 years and older had mammogram in the past 2 years

  According to the Nebraska Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey from 2007-2009, only 43% of African American aged 40 and older had a mammogram in the past 2 years, compared to 69% among Caucasian women.

- Mammogram is a life-saving test that is used to find breast cancer at early stage. American Cancer Society recommends that women should start getting mammogram every year at age 40. Women with family history of breast cancer should consult with their doctors to decide when they should begin mammogram.

- African American women are more likely to diagnosed at later stage

- According to the Nebraska Cancer Registry data (1999-2008), four out of ten African American women (38%) were diagnosed at regional or distant stage compared to 29% among Caucasian women.

- African American women have a very poor survival from breast cancer

  According to the Nebraska Cancer Registry and death certificate data, African American breast cancer patients have a much poorer survival compared to Caucasian breast cancer patients. Within 5 years following the breast cancer diagnosis only 43% of African American breast cancer patients were still alive.

- What are the reasons for poor survival among African American women?

  Percentage of survival among breast cancer patients: Nebraska 1999-2008

  There are many reasons why African American women have such a poor survival: genetics (triple negative breast cancer), late stage diagnosis, lack of access to timely and appropriate treatment and presence of other chronic medical conditions. Triple negative breast cancer is more common among younger women and among African American women. It is more aggressive and more difficult to treat than other types of breast cancers. But the major reason for poor breast cancer survival is late stage diagnosis. For that reason, the study highlights the importance of early detection to save lives of African American breast cancer patients.

Editor Note:

This research was done at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, if you would like to know more about breast cancer or the research that is going on that directly effects your community please call us at the College of Public Health Center for Reducing Health Disparities. Ira Combs RN BS 402-595-3807—Jackie Hill APRN MSN 402-595-3807
**Myth-VS-Fact**

Fact wins out again
Salt intake tied to higher blood pressure in kids

By Frederik Joelving

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - Children in the U.S. eat almost as much salt as adults, according to a new government study that finds a clear link between sodium intake and higher blood pressure.

The connection was particularly strong among overweight and obese children, said Quanhe Yang from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, who worked on the study.

That's concerning because both high blood pressure and excessive pounds are risk factors for cardiovascular problems such as heart attacks and stroke down the road, researchers say. "Our American diet clearly is very high in sodium," said Dr. Frederick Kaskel, chief of pediatric nephrology at Children's Hospital at Montefiore in New York, who was not involved in the research. "Not only is the high sodium something to be avoided, but it is also indicative of an unhealthy diet," he told Reuters Health.

The results, released Monday in the journal Pediatrics, are likely to fan the hot debate over the health effects of salt. While health authorities across the globe warn consumers to cut back on dietary salt, a number of recent studies have suggested that not getting enough salt can be as harmful as getting too much.

The salt industry has pounced on that research, saying the dietary guidelines for sodium intake are flawed and should be withdrawn. The CDC study is based on national surveys of more than 6,200 children and adolescents aged 8 to 18. The youths had their blood pressure measured between one and three times and also reported their diet in the prior 24 hours. On average, they ate 3,387 milligrams of sodium a day - considerably more than the 2,300 mg (about one teaspoon of salt) the government recommends as the upper limit.

According to previous data from the CDC, U.S. adults consume 3,466 mg of sodium per day by comparison. "Kids are consuming as much sodium as adults, which far exceeds the recommended amount," Yang told Reuters Health, encouraging parents and others to "read the label when you go shopping and buy the food with the lowest sodium content."

Yang and his colleagues found that for every 1,000 mg of extra sodium in the children's diets, there was a one-point rise increase in blood pressure. Among overweight and obese kids, each 1,000 mg of sodium was tied to a blood pressure increase of 1.5 points.

In adults, high blood pressure is defined as at least 140 mm Hg (the top, or systolic, number) or 90 mm Hg (the bottom, or diastolic, number). Doctors also talk about "prehypertension," which is defined as a top number between 120 mm Hg and 140 mm Hg or a bottom number between 80 mm Hg and 90 mm Hg.

The potential health effects of the small blood pressure variations seen in the study are not clear. But Kaskel said they could spell trouble later on. "The antecedents of adult cardiovascular disease are seen early on in the pediatric age group," he said. "We shouldn't underestimate the potential harms of a 1-mm increase in systolic blood pressure."

The new study doesn't prove that higher dietary salt intake directly increases blood pressure, however, although other research shows that is theoretically possible. "Many times the higher intakes of sodium may simply be a marker of a higher intake of fast food and processed foods," said nutritionist Lauren Graf of Children's Hospital at Montefiore.

She added that several ingredients in such foods, including fructose, have been tied to higher blood pressure. Dr. Michael Alderman of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York cautioned that it's not clear that cutting back on sodium will do most kids any good. "There is nothing in this paper and there is no information that I'm familiar with - that suggests reducing sodium intake is of value for people eating an average of 3,400 milligrams of sodium a day," he told Reuters Health. Alderman said he has been an adviser to the Salt Institute, which represents the industry, and received $750 from the group in 1995. He said he has no ties to the group today. Graf said bread is the biggest source of dietary sodium in the U.S., adding that deli meats also contain a lot of the ingredient. Eating a healthy diet - including whole grains, vegetables, fruits, and fresh fish and meats - will automatically reduce sodium intake, she noted.
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Cartoon stickers may sway kids’ food choices

By Genevra Pittman

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - For youngsters who turn up their noses at fruits and vegetables, slapping a cartoon face on a healthy snack could make those choices more appealing, a new study suggests.

Researchers found that when elementary school students were offered apples and cookies with lunch, kids were more likely to opt for an apple when it was branded with an Elmo sticker.

One researcher not involved in the new study said parents and school administrators can take a lesson from food companies: Elmo, Dora the Explorer and SpongeBob help sell snacks, healthy or unhealthy.

"There are so many foods that are of poor nutritional quality and they are being marketed to children," said Christina Roberto, who studies food choices at the Harvard School of Public Health in Boston.

Kid-friendly characters used for marketing "aren't popping up on the carrots and apples as much as they are on a wide range of foods that aren't so good for kids," Roberto told Reuters Health.

Those cartoon characters and other flashy advertising often don cookie and candy packaging, said David Just, co-director of the Cornell Center for Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition Programs in Ithaca, New York. For the new study, Just and his colleagues did the apple and cookie experiment with 208 eight- to 11-year-olds at suburban and rural schools every day at lunch for a week. Kids were allowed to choose an apple, a cookie or both snacks along with their normal meal.

Some of those days, the snacks were offered without cartoon stickers or other branding. On other days, either the cookie or the apple was branded with a familiar kids' character.

When the snacks weren't specially marked, 91 percent of kids took a cookie and just under one-quarter took an apple. Putting an Elmo sticker on the apples led 37 percent of kids to take fruit, the researchers reported this week in a letter to the Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine.

Stickers on cookies didn't affect kids' choice of the sweet snack - probably because the youngsters already knew they tasted good, according to Just.

Roberto said some experts want branding off of kids' foods altogether, but others are willing to experiment with marketing strategies to encourage kids to make healthier choices.

Just advocated for the latter strategy. "If we're trying to promote healthier foods, we need to be as smart as the companies that are selling the less-healthy foods," he told Reuters Health. "The message should be: fight fire with fire." Fire, in this case, being Elmo and other friendly faces, of course.

Using stickers on fruits and vegetables could be one cheap option to help improve students' diets, Roberto said, as well as something parents can try at home.

"It's not a bad idea to create those positive associations," Roberto said, "especially if you're struggling to get kids to eat healthy foods."
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