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Just In

Whole Grains Every Day May Help Protect Heart

Making a habit of eating a whole-grain cereal for breakfast could significantly reduce your risk of heart failure. That's what researchers with the Physicians' Health Study found when they analyzed the diets of more than 21,000 male physicians and tracked their incidence of heart failure. (Heart failure is when the heart cannot adequately pump enough blood.)

In the study, those who ate at least seven servings a week of whole-grain cereal were about 30% less likely to suffer heart failure, compared to those who ate no whole-grain cereal. Eating two to six servings a week lowered risk by up to 25%. There was no reduced risk from eating refined cereals. Whole grains contain natural plant compounds like phytoestrogens and phenolic acids that may benefit the heart.

The researchers conclude that more studies are needed, but increasing your intake of whole grains may be an important step to preventing heart failure.

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Diet Second Only To Smoking As Cancer Cause; 9 Things You Can Do

A recent survey by the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) found that nearly half of those questioned felt that preventing cancer was either impossible or highly unlikely. But a newly released international report on the dietary causes of cancer reveals you have the power to significantly modify your cancer risk.

According to the report, about one-third of the world's cancers could be avoided if everyone ate better, exercised more and weighed less. The report, *Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and the Prevention of Cancer: a Global Report*, from the AICR and its European counterpart, the World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF), follows the first report in 1997.

This is the most comprehensive look ever at the evidence linking cancer to diet, physical activity and weight. The five-year process involved nine teams of scientists from around the world, hundreds of peer reviewers and 21 international experts who analyzed more than 7,000 large-scale studies. It all culminated in substantive recommendations for cancer prevention unveiled at a meeting of experts in Washington, D.C., in November. *EN* was there.

A Push to Shed Pounds. Particularly striking, *EN* found, is the report's emphasis on overweight, which is based on plenty of research accumulated since the 1990s linking excess weight—particularly (continued on page 4)

Beyond 100-Calorie Packs: Strategies To Conquer Portion Distortion

There's no denying that portion control is crucial for reining in calories. But keeping track of how much you eat is a challenge, made no easier by the expanding reality of what's normal, starting in the morning with oversized muffins, bigger bagels and ever larger lattes. Face it, portion sizes are out of control.

Snack makers have found a way to benefit by tackling the issue with 100-calorie packs that provide popular built-in portion control. On the other hand, some fast-food companies have given nothing but lip service to reducing fats and calories, and have even upped the ante by offering 1,400-calorie burgers and 920-calorie breakfast burritos. Sit-down restaurants try to have it both ways with Jekyll-and-Hyde offerings.

EN examines this disconnect and offers sensible tips to keep you in control.

Sizing Up the Fast-Food Problem. In a recent *New York University* study that compared portion sizes of fast foods from 1998 through 2006, researchers found that unlike the snack-pack trend in

grocery stores, the serving sizes of fast-food hamburgers, sodas and French fries have not gotten smaller, but often bigger.

Burger King, for example, increased its portion sizes and introduced large specialty hamburgers. Last year, it began offering *BK Stacker* sandwiches in four sizes; Single, Double, Triple and Quad. Yes, quad, as in four! The quad burger weighs more than 11 ounces and contains an equally hefty 1,000 calories.

Since 2003, Hardee's has offered a *Monster Thickburger* with 12 ounces of beef and 1,420 calories and it recently introduced its *Country Breakfast Burrito*, which weighs in at 920 calories and 60 grams of fat—a full day's quota of fat.

Sneaky Supersizing. The NYU researchers note that during the eight-year span of the study, McDonald's pared portion sizes more than Burger King and Wendy's. McD's dropped its *Supersize* soda and French fries in 2004 and reduced the size of its medium and large fries.

But not entirely. It now seems the (continued on page 6)



Going Beyond: Strategies to Conquer Portion Distortion

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company is flirting with larger sizes again, just without the supersized semantics that spawned the movie *Supersize Me*, a less-than-flattering look at fast food. In 2006, McD's quietly brought back the 42-ounce soda as a limited summer promotion. Burger King and Wendy's continue to offer a 42-ounce soda.

But manipulation of portions is most sinister when it involves sleight of name. In 2006, for example, Wendy's dropped its *Biggie* and *Great Biggie* French fries in name only; the Medium size was simply renamed Small, the *Biggie* became Medium, and the *Great Biggie* was renamed Large. Similar name changes were made to soda sizes.

The Lucrative Snack Slim-Down.

Things look very different in the supermarket aisles, where you'll find a growing selection of portion-controlled snacks. The allure of single-serve snacks is that they help you limit intake without having to weigh or measure portions. These snacks get high marks for convenience and the 100-calorie ceiling reduces the guilt some people feel about snacking.

So what's the problem? These 100-calorie packs are hardly nutrition dynamos. Most are made with refined flour and sugar and contain very little fiber, though some are lower in fat than their original counterparts.

"The 100-calorie packs are better for you than 300-calorie snacks, but they're not exactly health food," says Lisa Young, Ph.D., R.D., a researcher with the NYU study and author of *The Portion Teller Plan: The No-Diet Real-*

ity Guide to Eating, Cheating and Losing Weight Permanently (Morgan Road Books, 2005). "For 100 calories, you're better off eating a piece of fruit."

Moreover, these snacks are costly for your wallet and the environment. They're often more than double the price per ounce of the companion item in a larger package. And the extra packaging required is environmentally unfriendly.

For some people, the convenience of grab-and-go, portion-controlled packs is worth the cost. But here's a secret: The slimmed down 100-calorie product isn't always a copy of the original. For example, 100-calorie *Oreo Thin Crisps* are chocolate wafers without the signature creamy middle of an Oreo cookie.

So here's a thought: To cut costs and packaging waste, portion out your own snacks into reusable plastic containers (see "Do-It-Yourself," right).

Practicing Portion Control. Here are some tips to use when food shopping, eating at home and dining out:

At the Supermarket:

- **Load your shopping cart with colorful, fiber-rich fresh fruits and vegetables.** There's no need to skimp on portions in the produce aisle.
- **Weigh food costs against your weight goals.** Buying jumbo-size packages may save you money, but the more you buy, the more you'll likely eat. And that's no bargain.
- **If it helps you, buy small,** such as bags of snacks, 100-calorie packs or items wrapped individually like frozen juice bars or low-fat fudge pops.

advocacy group in Washington, D.C., finish off an order of *Lagasma Classico* at Olive Garden and you'll down 2,240 calories. Or order *Spaghetti & Meatballs with Meat Sauce* from Romano's Macaroni Grill and you'll encounter 2,430 calories. Either one offers more than a full day's calories for most people.

The Ugly. Even TGI Friday's can't seem to fully embrace the nutrition version of "do the right thing." While *EN* applauds its efforts to offer slimmed down portions, we give a thumbs down to its website, which says ordering the *Right Portion, Right Price* menu items "leaves more room for appetizers, desserts and, of course, margaritas." Sounds like they're trying to have their cake and eat it too. Resist the urge.

Do-It-Yourself 100-Calorie Portion Control

(Each snack provides about 100 calories.)

- 1 small banana
- 1 medium pear
- 3 plums
- 14 almonds
- 28 grapes (about ¼ cup)
- ½ medium apple with 2 teaspoons peanut butter
- ½ cup plain nonfat yogurt with ½ cup sliced strawberries
- 10 baby carrots with 2 tablespoons fat-free ranch dressing
- 1 mini whole-wheat pita with 1½ tablespoons hummus
- Hot cocoa made with ¾ cup nonfat milk and 1 teaspoon cocoa
- Sugar-free instant chocolate pudding made with ½ cup 2% milk

At Home:

- **Cook in large batches** to save time, freezing the extra as single servings.
- **Choose dinner plates no larger than nine inches** or eat from a salad plate instead. Use a six-ounce glass for juice to limit consumption.
- **Serve one portion onto each plate in the kitchen** rather than serving family-style at the table. Stick to one serving, except for vegetables.
- **Drop out of the "clean plate club."** When you're almost full, stop eating. Give your brain time to catch up with your stomach. Save extra food for lunch the next day.

At Restaurants:

- **Ask for an appetizer portion of an entrée** and add a salad, choose items off the children's menu or share an entrée with a dining companion.
- **Read fast-food nutrition information** in store brochures or on the website in advance, when possible.
- **Don't rely on the names of sizes;** ask your server to show you the cup or serving size—a "medium" may be larger than you think.
- **Don't overeat just because you paid for it;** take the rest home in a doggie bag and enjoy it the next day.

—Adrienne Forman, M.S., R.D.

Restaurants Have It Both Ways

While fast-food restaurants are living large, some sit-down establishments are testing the portion control waters by introducing smaller portion sizes of popular menu items.

The Good. TGI Friday's now offers alternative menu items that are 30% smaller, as well as 33% less expensive. Dubbed *Right Portion, Right Price*, the restaurant offers reduced portions of high-calorie foods, such as *Jack Daniel's Chicken Alfredo*, as well as of more healthful menu items like *Shrimp Key West*.

The Bad. However, not all restaurateurs have jumped on the portion control bandwagon. According to a recent survey by the Center for Science in the Public Interest, a consumer