

Research Roundup

There's always something new to learn in the exciting world of nutrition. New research findings are intriguing to us because we all eat and we realize that what we eat affects our health, so these studies are very much applicable to our daily lives. There have been many fascinating new studies released this year and I want to give you information on a few of the most promising ones.

Each week, several nutrition studies are reported in the news and in scientific journals. However, many of those studies are not worth our consideration for a variety of reasons ranging from the fact that the study subjects were rats (rats and humans are very different species) or that only a handful of people participated in the study (50 or 100 people is not a representative sample of the population). I always bring you the most relevant information by highlighting results from large, well-designed studies, like the Nurse's Health Study. It is also important to keep in mind that studies must be repeated several times with similar results in order for their findings to become truly relevant. Below are results from several recent well-designed studies.

✓ Sugar Shockers

Eating sugar is not just a concern for people with diabetes; two new studies have drawn a connection between simple carbohydrates and cardiovascular health. It seems that a diet that raises blood glucose (sugar) also affects the systems responsible for cholesterol and blood pressure control, as well as the heart itself.

Results from the ongoing European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition trial (EPIC trial) of nearly 48,000 Italian adults found a strong relationship between a high glycemic diet



Gelson's Registered Dietitian, **Jessica Siegel**, has a Masters in Public Health. However, she is not a doctor and her nutritional recommendations are not tailored to specific health problems. Consult your physician before beginning any nutritional program. To contact Jessica, please call her at 1-800-GELSONS.

Features in this Issue

Research Roundup
Naked Food of the Month: **Lettuce**



and heart disease in women. Specifically, the women in the study who ate the most carbohydrate-rich foods (which raise blood sugar) were more than twice as likely to develop heart disease as the women who ate the fewest such foods. This result is not entirely unsurprising, as foods with a high glycemic load (GL) raise blood glucose levels quickly after they are eaten and have been shown to raise triglyceride levels and lower HDL (good) cholesterol levels, which in turn increases heart disease risk. Examples of high GL foods include bread, candy, cake, cookies, most cereals, crackers and other foods and beverages that contain added sugar. Other studies have confirmed that diets high in added sugars raise heart disease risk via the same mechanisms, so it makes sense that diets high in fast-absorbing carbohydrates do so as well.

Another study from the ongoing National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES 2003 to 2006) concluded that diets high in added fructose, a type of sugar, are linked to high blood pressure. Fructose from table sugar and high fructose corn syrup were the major sources of fructose in participants' diets, and the more they consumed, the higher their blood pressure tended to be. Half of the adults in the study consumed 74 grams a day (300 calories) or more, which almost doubled their risk of hypertension. The

American Heart Association recommends a limit of 25 grams (about 100 calories) of added sugar a day for women and a limit of 36 grams (about 140 calories) of added sugar a day for men. For perspective, a 12-ounce can of soda contains 39 grams of added sugar (in the form of high fructose corn syrup). Although fruit naturally contains small amounts of fructose, it is not considered added sugar and fruit has been shown to help lower blood pressure.

Eating a diet that is high in added sugars and highly refined foods that are digested quickly is not a healthful practice in general. However, you may be surprised to learn that these foods are associated with heart disease and hypertension in addition to diabetes. For disease prevention, I recommend eating foods that are minimally processed, which means they are in their most natural form and have few ingredients, if any, added to them. These foods are naturally low in sugar and have a lower glycemic load. Examples of low glycemic carbohydrate-containing foods are beans, legumes, steel-cut oats, barley, quinoa, brown rice, fruits and vegetables. Try to choose these foods over high glycemic foods and balance them with healthful fat from extra virgin olive oil and nuts, as well as proteins from fish, poultry, omega-3 eggs, low-fat dairy products and beans (a source of both protein and low-glycemic carbohydrate).

✓ Score Two for Fish Oil

Several studies have shown that fish oil benefits the heart and brain, but two new studies on this omega-3 rich oil have some additional exciting results. Along with promoting heart and brain health, fish oil may help people with heart disease live longer and protect against breast cancer.

The Heart and Soul Study has determined that people with stable cardiac disease have higher survival rates when they have more omega-3 fatty acids (in the form of EPA and DHA) in their blood. Previous studies have shown that healthy individuals with high levels of omega-3 fatty acids in their blood have a reduced risk of sudden cardiac death as well as heart disease, but this study shows that fish oil is especially helpful for extending the lives of people who already have heart disease. Omega-3 fatty acids from fish oil seem to be cardio-protective because they slow the biological aging of cells that are associated with cardiac-related death.

The Vitamins and Lifestyle (VITAL) cohort study is the first study to draw a

connection between women who take fish oil supplements and a lower risk of breast cancer. Of the more than 35,000 post-menopausal women in the study, those who regularly took an unspecified quantity of fish oil in supplement form had a 32% reduction in breast cancer risk (the association was only with ductal, not lobular forms of the cancer). No other type of supplement was found to offer any breast cancer protection. The study authors caution that since this is the first study that found a connection between fish oil and breast cancer, women should not begin taking the supplement solely for cancer prevention.

Omega-3 fatty acids are an important part of a healthful diet. The Mediterranean Diet and the American Heart Association both recommend that we eat oily fish such as salmon, tuna, herring, mackerel, trout, black cod and sardines at least twice a week. Alternatively, consider discussing a high-quality fish oil supplement with your doctor. The EPA and DHA found in fish oils are the most beneficial types of omega-3s and both of these studies were based on this source of fat.

✓ Coffee Brews Benefits

Coffee seems to have a controversial reputation for most people, but research is slowly bringing to light many of its positive health effects. It seems that certain preparations and quantities of



coffee may help protect against diabetes and a type of reproductive cancer.

A recent analysis of 18 previously published studies on coffee showed that drinking three to four regular cups of joe a day was associated with an approximately 25% lower risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Each cup of brewed coffee—regular or decaf—was associated with a 7% reduction in diabetes risk. A subsequent study found a similar risk reduction, especially when coffee was consumed around lunchtime. Some researchers think that coffee moderates diabetes risk by altering hormones that are related to sugar metabolism, but the exact mechanisms are still not known. These studies found benefits associated with filtered coffee, not espresso drinks.

A large study in Sweden found that coffee may also reduce endometrial cancer risk. The Swedish Mammography Cohort Study followed over 60,000 women for 17 years and found that women who drank at least two cups of regular coffee a day were less likely to develop cancer that affects the cells lining the uterus. Overweight and obese women are at increased risk for endometrial cancer and were especially protected by coffee. Again, scientists speculate that coffee's effects on hormones may be protective.

I'm not surprised that coffee offers so much protection—it is, after all, a plant food. It is very high in antioxidants and is a source of magnesium. Coffee in moderation seems like it can be a beneficial part of your diet, but be mindful of how you take your coffee. Nestlé researchers found that adding sugar and non-dairy creamers reduced the absorption of antioxidants, thereby possibly reducing the protective benefits. However, adding milk to coffee did not interfere with antioxidant absorption. If you normally sweeten your coffee, I recommend that you gradually reduce the amount you add (see Sugar Shockers on previous pages), but feel free to add some milk to your coffee and remember that one cup is eight ounces.

Nutrition research is important because the results help to form our knowledge base regarding the effect of what we ingest on our health. Keep in mind that one study, even a very large, well-designed one, does not automatically become nutritional fact; studies must be repeated and results must be replicated

before recommendations can be made. Many of the studies I report on may not sound like “new” news because they often are just confirming results from previous studies. The benefits of us knowing about new studies is to inform our eating habits and consider making changes based on our own personal risk factors. None of the studies that I report on should cause harm or increase your risk of disease if you make dietary or lifestyle changes based on their findings. After all, most studies conclude that eating more produce and plant foods improve health, and there is certainly a lot of potential benefit involved in eating more whole grains, beans, fish and coffee—in moderation, of course.



It is way too hot outside to seriously consider slaving over a hot stove, but it is still possible to put some lovely and refreshing homemade (or in this case, “homemixed”) dinners on the table this month. I’m keeping it simple and recommending one-dish meals where all of your vegetables and proteins are in one big salad or sandwich. These recipes take advantage of Gelson’s prepared foods offerings by using cooked shrimp from the Seafood Department, Peppered Beef Tenderloin from the Service Deli, rotisserie chicken from the hot case, edamame from the salad bar and Carving Cart turkey for proteins. We’ll heat up our kitchens so that you don’t have to. Enjoy fruit on the side or for dessert.

August Almost-No-Cook Sample Dinner Menu Ideas

Day	Salad	Dessert
Monday	Chopped Basil and Arugula Salad* with Gelson’s Finest rustic bread on the side	Chocolate Covered Strawberries*
Tuesday	Thai Beef Salad*	Grapes
Wednesday	Mango Chutney Chicken Pitas* with sugar snap peas and baby carrots on the side	Summer Berry Delight*
Thursday	Mediterranean Salad*	Golden Kiss melon
Friday	Turkey and Avocado Tostada Salad*	1 Dove Miniatures Dark Chocolate Ice Cream Bar
Saturday	Go out to dinner	
Sunday	Family dinner at Mom’s house	

*Recipes available at www.gelsons.com

Naked Food of the Month: Lettuce

Okay, I'll admit it: lettuce doesn't taste that great naked, but a simple dressing and a sprinkling of fruit and nuts or other fresh veggies is all it needs to go from drab to fab in no time. August is the perfect time to feature the abundant array of lettuces that Gelson's has to offer since big salads make for perfect meals in hot weather.

There are over 40 types of salad greens, each with varying amounts of nutrition, but they all contain good quantities of vitamins A and C, folate, beta-carotene, and lutein. Vitamin A, beta-carotene, and lutein help protect our eyes from cataracts and age-related macular degeneration and enhance vision. Folate is an under-consumed nutrient for many, but it is important for lowering artery-clogging homocysteine levels in the blood and for preventing neural tube defects in developing fetuses. Vitamins A and C, folate and beta-carotene are all important for the formation of healthy tissue and skin, and therefore help protect our immune systems.

A serving of raw lettuce is one cup, and has between five and ten calories. Small leaves and baby lettuces tend to be more nutritious because when larger leaves are



Salad greens contain good quantities of vitamins A and C, folate, beta-carotene and lutein.

torn or cut they lose vitamin C and other water-soluble nutrients. Try to eat a mixture of different varieties of greens, so you can reap all the nutritional benefits they have to offer. Arugula and watercress offer the most nutrition, and because they are actually members of the cruciferous vegetable family (along with cabbage, bok choy, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, and cauliflower) they contain indoles, which help protect against cancer. Remember the color rule, too: the deeper the color, the more nutritious the vegetable (so try to include some of the purple baby romaine leaves in your mix).

Greens are abundant all year long at Gelson's, and are sold in heads, loose in bulk, and in boxes or bags. The difference among them is really just a matter of convenience. There are also several organic options. Whichever you buy, make sure the leaves are crisp, free

of brown edges or spots, and are moist, but not wet. At home, store your lettuce in the crisper, inside plastic bags with a few holes in them. All greens need to be washed just before you use them, even bagged varieties, to remove any grit and sand. A salad spinner is your best bet for properly washed and dried leaves. Paper towels are helpful for removing extra moisture, too. Whatever your preferred method, make sure your lettuce is dry, since dressing will not stick to wet leaves. Dress and toss your salads just before you eat them—preferably with extra virgin first cold pressed olive oil and some vinegar or lemon juice. Dressings that contain fat are important since many of the nutrients in lettuce and other salad ingredients are only absorbed in the presence of fat. This month, try my recipes for Tropical Seafood Salad and Crisp Summer Salad.

Read My New Blog!

I want to help you raise healthy eaters, so I have started a blog called *Healthy Families* on our website, www.gelsons.com. I document my experiences and thoughts about feeding my 14-month old daughter and hopefully impart some worthwhile nutritional wisdom to my readers. Please check it weekly and join me on this very important parenting journey.

Jessica's Store Appearances

Recipes from Jessica's Kitchen Sampling

Come taste Crunchy Kale Salad, my latest creation for Gelson's Service Delis.

Friday, August 13

Encino 11:00am

Monday, August 23

West Hollywood 12:00pm

Tuesday, August 24

Hollywood 4:30pm

Thursday, August 26

Century City 12:00pm

Monday, August 30

Tarzana 12:00pm

Valley Village 3:00pm