

**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES NEWSLETTER**

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## Is Brown the Color of Health?

Jessica Brennan, EFNEP Agent

Consumers have been bombarded by messages telling us that brown rice is healthier than white rice and that dark chocolate actually has nutritional value to it. So, it reasons to ask: Is food of a darker color better for you than lighter colored food?

### Sugar

The dark coloring of brown sugar obtained when molasses, another type of sugar, is added to white sugar. Therefore, brown sugar is higher in calories than white sugar. This is true regardless of whether the original sugar is refined or raw. The difference between these types is that raw sugar is less processed than refined. However, when discussing nutritional value, sugar is sugar and will be broken down in the body in the same manner.



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The egg shell color is determined by the breed of the hen. Hens with white feathers and white earlobes generally produce white eggs. While the genes of red hens with red earlobes will most often produce eggs with brown shells.

### Bread



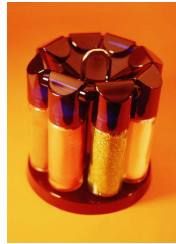
Do not be fooled into thinking a bread's darker coloring means it has not been refined and still contains all parts of the kernel. The truth is that cracked wheat, pumpernickel, 100% wheat and rye breads are dark in color, even though they are refined. To make sure you are getting the most nutritious bread, those containing primarily whole grains, look to the ingredients label. If the first couple ingredients do not have the word "whole" in them then the bran and germ has been removed along with most vitamins, minerals and fiber.

### Eggs

There is no nutritional benefit to eating brown eggs instead of white.

## Rice

Generally, if you choose rice labeled brown rice, you are picking the most nutritious rice for you. All white rice, whether enriched or not, is not as



nutritionally dense as brown rice. Additionally, yellow rice and Spanish rice are actually white rice with added spices giving them a different color. Wild rice is not actually rice at all, but marsh grass from the northern United States and southern Canada. Wild rice is a very healthy alternative to rice, being lower in calories and fat, and higher in protein and fiber than even brown rice.

## Pasta

Pasta follows the same principles of bread. It can be made from whole grain flour or refined grain flour. If the pasta's ingredients list has the word "whole" in the first few ingredients, then it has more nutritional value than those that do not say whole in the beginning.

## Meat

It is not the color of the meat that makes dark meat less healthy for you. White meat is made up of fast twitch muscle fibers that are naturally lighter in color due to the energy source they store and draw from. Dark meat is the slow twitch muscle fibers that get their energy from a protein with a darker pigment. Dark

meat does not have less vitamins or minerals when looking at comparable weights. However, it does have more saturated fat (seen visually as white marble) throughout and surrounding it, therefore increasing the calories, fat and making it less healthy when comparing it to white meat.

## Chocolate

The difference between brown chocolate and white chocolate is that white chocolate does not contain chocolate liquor (non alcoholic) or cocoa powder. Because of the lack of both ingredients, many, including the Food & Drug Administration, do not consider white chocolate to be actual "chocolate." Without either of these ingredients, it lacks caffeine which could be considered by some to be a nutritional benefit, however white chocolate still

contains cocoa butter, sugar and milk making it high in calories and fat. Only dark chocolate, the type made without the

addition of milk, can result in lower blood pressure. The presence of milk decreases the effectiveness of the antioxidants in chocolate that help to lower blood pressure. Unfortunately, this means that milk chocolate is out, too.



# Caffeine - Good, Bad or Neither?

Mary Keith, PhD, LD/N, Foods, Nutrition and Health Agent



You can't count your coffee as part of your daily water, right? Wrong! A cup of strong black coffee will sober you up after a party night? Nope! Coffee can protect you from Parkinson's disease? Yes!

It's not the coffee, it's the caffeine that seems to be the protector. But since Americans get 75% of their caffeine from coffee, that's a powerful punch from the morning brew. So what else is new in our knowledge of caffeine? Here are some tidbits.

## The Good Sides of Caffeine

Besides slowing down Parkinson's disease, caffeine does improve most people's moods. We're more alert, sociable and energetic. Part of the energy boost might be that it tells our bodies to burn fat instead of carbs. That allows us to exercise longer on the same meal.

People who drink several cups of coffee a day tend to have fewer gallstones than those who don't. Tea, sodas and decaf coffee didn't help.

Caffeine does help get rid of the headache too. By tightening the blood vessels in our brains it relieves our pain. It's an active ingredient in several over the counter pain and headache medications.

## The Not-so-Good Sides of Caffeine

Because caffeine is a drug that does have an active effect on how our bodies work, it also has its bad side. Most of us know that coffee can keep us up and awake when we'd rather be sleeping. But caffeine is also addictive, and if we don't get it we can be downright nasty in the

mornings! Going without gives us headaches and clouds our thinking.

After lots of swinging back and forth, the evidence seems to be settling onto the side that lots of coffee does lower a woman's fertility. It might also increase her risk of miscarriages. In research animals with very high doses of caffeine contribute to birth defects in babies, but that's not been proven in humans.

And while a little caffeine helps the headache go away, regular use seems to bring on migraines more often.

## The Non-Sides of Caffeine

First, caffeine is not a diuretic. It won't dry you out unless you're drinking several high-caffeine beverages a day. So several cups of tea or coffee a day won't be a problem.

At this point, caffeine also seems to have no effect on our risks of heart disease, diabetes, kidney or pancreatic cancer. Its effect on raising our blood pressure seems to be temporary, and long term users don't have higher pressure than those who don't use it. What a relief!

On the other hand, there's no good evidence that it helps us lose weight either. Drats! And while caffeine does take a little bit of calcium out of our bones, a few tablespoons of milk a day can cover the loss.

Do we need it in candy bars, oatmeal and beer?

Probably not. But the caffeine in a couple cups of coffee or cans of soda seems to be less of a problem than the calories from the sugar. And the more we use it, the more our body wants. Just take it easy.



# Adolescents and Risk: Helping Teens Make Better Choices

## Diana Converse, Family Life Educator

Adolescence, as every parent knows, is a time of risks. With greater freedom and independence, young people face new choices involving automobiles, addictive substances, and sexuality - frequently in combination. Contrary to the cliché that teens think they are immortal and invulnerable to harm, studies conducted at Cornell University suggest that young people are *well aware* of their vulnerability.

Adolescents estimate some of their risks quite accurately (such as the odds of pregnancy) and they actually *overestimate* their risks for negative outcomes like contracting STDs, getting lung cancer and suffering adverse consequences of drinking alcohol.



Young people take risks not because of a belief that they are immortal but because they mentally weigh risks against perceived benefits too much. When risks are engaged in “only once or twice,” the odds may appear favorable to teens. Adults, in contrast tend to “go with their gut” – they don’t trade off serious risks against immediate rewards and their choices are better as a result.

The brain areas that quickly grasp the gist of risky situations and regulate judgment (specifically parts of the frontal lobe) are still developing during the teenage years, and don’t reach full maturity until the early to mid twenties for most people. The adolescent brain just isn’t yet optimized for making an adult assessment of circumstances. An adult faced with temptations would be more likely to skip the deliberation and go to the main point. In other words, the grown-up brain quickly grasps the risks of a situation: nothing is worth risking one’s life or health for future happiness.

Parents can use the following strategies to keep young people safe and help them make better choices:

- Help adolescents see benefits differently, not just risks. Risks will have less appeal

if teens perceive greater benefit from alternative, safer courses of action.

- Use analogies to steer adolescents away from deliberative calculation toward more categorical thinking about risks. To help young people see that no possible payoff of risky behavior is worth risking death, ask questions like “would you play Russian Roulette for one million dollars?”
- Give adolescents practice at recognizing environmental signs of danger. Teach them about “red alerts” that indicate the possibility of various risks – for example, being home after school with a boyfriend or girlfriend (and no parent) as a signal of the possibility of unwanted or unsafe sex.
- Give teens real-world tasks and concrete strategies to help them become responsible and capable. For example, teens who are not ready for sex can practice refusal skills. A well-practiced skill can be used automatically, without requiring a lot of thinking.
- Limit adolescents’ exposure to risky situations and substances. For example, limit the number of peers in automobiles and avoid exposing minors to addictive substances -rather than exposing young people to alcohol to teach them to drink responsibly, which has been shown to be ineffective and in fact is associated with higher rates of binge drinking.
- Monitor and supervise younger adolescents. Rather than rely on reasoned choices, remove younger teens’ opportunity to engage in risk taking by occupying their time with positive activities.
- Teach teens to avoid circumstances in which they will need to make an immediate, risky choice – for instance, encourage them to stay away from situations where alcohol and drugs may be present or to call you for a ride home.



## Credit Score Rules Changing for Authorized User By Lisa Leslie, Hillsborough County Extension Agent

Fair Isaac Corporation is the developer of the widely used FICO credit scores. Recently, Fair Isaac Corporation changed the rules regarding how being an authorized user on a credit



card in someone else's name can appear on your report and influence your credit score.

In the past, if the accountholder managed the account well, then this would benefit the authorized user. However, if the accountholder mismanaged the account, this negative information could hurt an authorized user of the account. One benefit of being an authorized user that still remains is that since the authorized user is not an accountholder, they are not liable for the debt from the lender's point of view.

Fair Isaac's new criteria will mean an authorized user's credit history will disappear from any account where the person is not listed as an accountholder.

### Who can this affect?

**Couples:** This is especially concerning for some older couples, widows, or recently divorced. In some households or family situations, a wage earner may have been the only one with credit in his or her name; making a spouse an authorized user only. Previously this would have led to building credit for both parties. As a result of the change, people in these situations may find their credit rating or report to be different than it was in recent years.

**College Students:** Many college students relied on being an authorized user to safely build credit. As a result of this change in Fair Isaac's computation, these students, while still being able to use their parent's credit, will no longer be building their own credit history in the process.

**Why is Fair Isaac changing the system?** One of the reasons this issue needed to be addressed was because credit-repair websites were springing up allowing strangers to "piggyback" their credit score to others in exchange for a fee. By doing this, consumers were able to increase their score, yet nothing changed in their credit behavior that would lead a lender to believe they are more credit worthy.

To better understand how this does or not affect your credit score and report, you can always request free copies of your credit reports to find out what accounts are being reported under your name and the status of those



accounts at the federally authorized web site [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) or by calling 1-877-322-8228. This site will not provide the score for free, but you can order it for a small fee.

**Caution!** Many companies have misleading offers that sound like they are offering free credit reports but they are actually selling product subscriptions. The above web site and number is the best place to order your free reports. Make sure you do not misspell the web site address.

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