

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES NEWSLETTER

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November 2007

How Healthy Fast Food is Helping Americans Gain Weight

Jessica Brennan, EFNEP Extension Agent

Common reasoning would lead you to believe that with a greater number of healthy fast food restaurants selling lower calorie items, American's weight would decrease. In fact, over the last five years, "healthy" fast food establishments, such as Subway and Crispers, have increased at a faster rate than those not making any health claims, while 60% of Americans are eating this healthier fast food, an increase of 12% over 10 years.

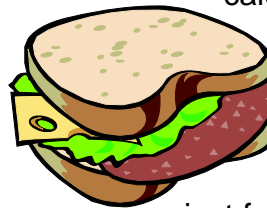
So why is it that from 1991 to 2001, the amount of obese U.S. adults has grown from 23% to 31%? The increase of American obesity rates and the popularity of healthier foods is called "the American obesity paradox" by scientists who are trying to make sense of this phenomenon.

Researchers studying this situation have noticed some behaviors that are common to people who order food from healthier fast food restaurants that can undo their healthy eating intentions. The first is assuming that all food sold in



restaurants labeled healthy is low in calories. In fact, when an item comes from a restaurant marketed as healthy, consumers underestimate the calories by up to 35%.

For a 600 calorie sandwich, that is 200 calories people don't know they are eating. This may seem like a small amount, but if you do this twice a week for one year you could gain almost 6 pounds just from those meals.



The second behavior that studies are showing is that when people order a main course from a place claiming to be healthy, they tend to add high calorie side items, desserts or drinks to their meal more often than those eating at a restaurant making no health claims. This practice leads one to eat more calories than if only ordering an unhealthy sandwich in the first place.

Pair these behaviors together: not knowing that you are eating a high calorie food and then ordering a high calorie side item, drink or dessert on top of that, and you *will* overeat during that meal. Over a year, this will add up to much more than 6 extra pounds.

So, what can you do as a consumer? Research says that all you have to do is think critically. In other words, do not believe everything that you are told and think for yourself.

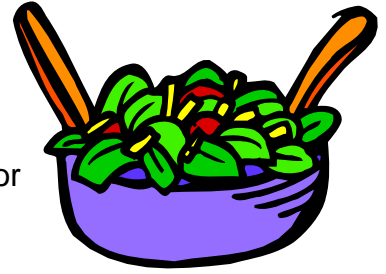
Once people in the studies were asked to question whether the food *labeled* as healthy was really healthy, their opinions changed. They began to guess the correct amount of calories in their food and stopped ordering the unhealthy side items, drinks and desserts.

Here are some things to consider when deciding whether a food is really healthy or not:

- Look at the sauces or dressings that are included in that item. If the base of the sauce is high in fat and calories, like mayonnaise or buttermilk, you could be adding 100 calories or more to the food.
- Remember that fat-free dressings still add calories. If you must have a dressing, these are a better choice, but you must still account for the added calories.
- Cheese is high in fat and calories. Could you order your sandwich with half the cheese normally included or cut it completely? This will make your food healthier.
- Substitute whole wheat bread for white. You will be getting more nutrients out of the sandwich than before with less waste.



- Consider the type of meat on the sandwich. Meat such as salami, bologna, bacon and pepperoni should be avoided. Instead look for lean meat like turkey, ham, chicken breast or roast beef. Also keep in mind that processed meat is high in salt, so if there is a low-sodium option, go for that.
- Think about how the item is prepared. Is the chicken on the sandwich breaded and fried? Was butter added to the bread before it was heated? These are also ways that calories and fat can sneak into your diet without you even noticing.
- Give up the unhealthy side items. If you think you will still be hungry after you eat your main course, add some veggies to your sandwich or order a side salad. These will fill you up for a longer time and give your body the vitamins and minerals it needs without adding excess fat and calories.
- Finally, do your homework. Just about every restaurant has its nutritional information posted on their website or can make it available to you at the counter, before you order. Just ask. Then you can be in charge of what you put in your body and do not have to take their advertiser's word.



Take Control of Holiday Spending

By Lisa Leslie, Hillsborough County Extension Agent

The holiday season has become synonymous with shopping and spending. Consumers of all ages will be bombarded with advertisements designed to steer us toward buying gifts, toys, holiday decorations, new home furnishings, holiday vacations, and much more. The commercial messages often imply that new material things such as electronic products, toys, appliances, and clothes are crucial to enhancing the quality of our lives. Ok, so the pressure is on to get you to let go of your money & buy!

Even though it's the holiday season and a time of good cheer, we still need to spend realistically. Your job as a financially responsible consumer is to make a holiday budget that fits your personal situation. Consider your income and your financial goals. Do not sacrifice your financial plans for fleeting holiday cheer.

Tips for Controlling Holiday Spending:

Size up your financial situation. The first step is to sit down and look at your financial picture. Decide just how much you can afford to spend this holiday season.

Create a holiday budget. The budget should include all the holiday extras such as decorations, gifts, new clothes, and whatever else you might be thinking of buying this holiday season. Set realistic spending amounts for each category.

Avoid debt. If you are already carrying credit card balances, adding to those balances can be very expensive. Try to avoid charging items that you can not pay off before the interest starts accruing.

Consider the following if you are thinking of "charging" holiday expenses on credit cards:

Credit Card Balance	Monthly Payment	Annual % Rate	Time to Pay
\$1,000	\$100	12%	11 months
\$5,000	\$200	12%	29 months
\$5,000	\$100	12%	72 months

As you can see from the table above, it can take years to pay off debts.

Avoid impulse buys. Do not shop when you are tired or rushed. Shop around and compare your options. Try to avoid last minute shopping that can lead to panic buying.

Make conscious spending decisions. Determine why you are spending. Does your holiday spending match your long term financial plans? Are you spending to fulfill societal obligations and ignoring your own personal values?

Use a holiday spending worksheet. Visit <http://tampabaysaves.ifas.ufl.edu> and download the holiday spending worksheet.

Protecting Your Child against Disease

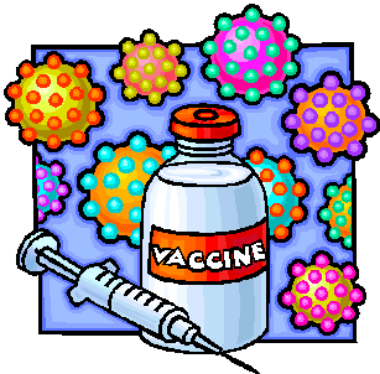
Diana Converse, Family Life Educator

Immunizations (also called vaccinations or shots) are an effective way to protect your children from infectious diseases that are not only uncomfortable, but may lead to serious, long-term complications. These diseases can even be life-threatening.

It is especially important for children who attend a child care center to be up-to-date with their immunizations. These youngsters are at greater risk of catching an infection because they are exposed to many other children and to adult caregivers who may be carrying disease-causing germs. Immunizing children also helps to reduce disease among people who have not been vaccinated. Because when fewer people get the disease, then fewer people can spread the disease.

Mild reactions to a vaccine may occur, including redness, soreness or swelling where the shot was given. These usually clear up within a few days. Some children may have increased reactions, such as fever, irritability and drowsiness. Ask your child's doctor about safety and side effects of immunizations.

Immunizations and/or schedules change as knowledge and technology changes. Make sure your child receives all the immunizations listed in the Recommended Childhood and Adolescent Immunization Schedule, available at www.cdc.gov/nip/recs/child-schedule.htm.



Vaccines protect against these diseases:

- Hepatitis B (most commonly given over a period of six months)
- Diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis, also known as whooping cough (one vaccine covers all three diseases)
- Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) infection
- Polio (the vaccine is known as IPV, or inactivated polio vaccine)
- Measles, mumps and rubella, also called German measles (the vaccine is MMR)
- Varicella, or chicken pox
- Pneumococcal infection (the vaccine is PCV7, or pneumococcal conjugate vaccine)
- Influenza (flu)
- Meningococcal meningitis

If your child has missed getting any shots, ask your doctor or other health care professional about catch-up shots.

Florida universities currently recommend that college students living in a residence hall submit up-to-date immunizations forms (includes Meningococcal Meningitis) or sign a waiver before registering for classes. However, this immunization may become a requirement due to a recent campus death.

Immunizations have greatly reduced the threat of vaccine-preventable diseases in the United States. Many other countries, however, still have outbreaks and epidemics of these infections. We must continue to immunize our children so that disease outbreaks do not happen here. With international travel so common today, the global spread of infectious diseases remains a threat.

For the Florida Department of Health Bureau of Immunization website, visit: http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Disease_Ctrl/immun/index.html.

The Latest on Defense for the Common Cold

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

With cold season just around the corner several new research reviews are throwing cold water on some of the common cold fighters. New reports have analyzed all the currently available information on zinc, vitamin C and echinacea. Do they work? Are they worth taking? The short answer is "Maybe, but probably not."

Problems

Part of the problem is that there is so little really good research. Most of the research has been done with small groups, or with people who knew what they were taking, or who took it for too short a time. It is much too easy for people who know they're taking 'the real thing' to think they feel better whether their condition changes or not. Colds come and go so rapidly that taking any remedy for just a short time might not be a real indication of what it can do.

Another part of the problem is that there are so many causes of colds. At least 200 different viruses can give us cold symptoms. Many studies focus on the most common one, rhinovirus. But maybe these treatments only work, or work best, on some of the other viruses. It is difficult to figure out.

Vitamin C

The use of high doses of vitamin C has probably been suggested longer than the other two remedies. Since the 1970's people have been taking it by the grams (instead of milligrams), in hopes of preventing or curing colds. Despite little to no evidence that it works, the sales keep going up, up, up.

This latest report does nothing to raise our hopes. Comparing 24 different studies, of almost 11,000 people, the difference in results was only 2%. That is, people taking vitamin C only had 2% fewer colds than those taking a placebo (sugar pill).

The one group of people who did seem to benefit were those working in extremely cold conditions. Since that is not likely to occur in Florida, there's not much to say we should be taking it here. The other studies that showed a little promise were with people who took large doses year round. Is the expense of taking tablets all year worth 1 ½ days of feeling a little better once or twice a year?

Zinc

Zinc lozenges have been popular too, without good evidence to support them. In this case the doctors looked at over 100 studies and found only 14 that might be able to really tell the difference. The results? Half said that zinc helped, half said it did not. And all of them had design problems.

However, one good study did find that using a zinc nasal gel did help in significantly preventing or shortening a cold. That's only 1 out of 100+ studies, not a very strong recommendation.

Echinacea

This herbal supplement is also in the middle of competing results. Some studies find that it shortens colds by a day and half. Some say it cuts the numbers of colds in half. And some find it does neither.

Besides the problems of too little research and too many viruses, echinacea has another weakness. Since it is not regulated we have no way of knowing exactly what we are getting, or how much we are getting. There are over 800 products available. Every bottle on the shelf could be different, but we would have no way of knowing which to trust.

What can you do? Wash your hands frequently, drink plenty of fluids, eat a healthy diet, and get your flu shot. Maybe by next year they'll have better answers for us.

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November 2007
Family & Consumer Sciences

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