

Quick Studies

A snapshot of the latest research on diet, exercise, and more.

Take the High Road



Are some weight-loss diets better than others?

Scientists randomly assigned 100 people with abdominal obesity (waists larger than 35 inches for women or 40 inches for men) to eat their usual diet or either a high-quality or a low-quality diet with a 25-percent calorie cut.

The high-quality diet was richer in fiber, unsaturated fats, and plant protein from foods like whole grains, fruit, fish, tofu, and olive oil, while the low-quality diet had more refined grains, juice, meat, and butter. (The high-quality group also got a daily fish oil capsule with 400 mg of EPA and 300 mg of DHA.)

After 12 weeks, the high-quality group had lost 18 pounds, the low-quality group had lost 14 pounds, and the usual-diet group had lost no weight. What's more, blood cholesterol and triglycerides fell more in the high-quality than in the low-quality group (and not at all in the usual-diet group).

What to do: Trying to lose weight? A healthy diet is a good strategy.

Am. J. Clin. Nutr. 2022. doi:10.1093/ajcn/nqac025.

The More, the Merrier

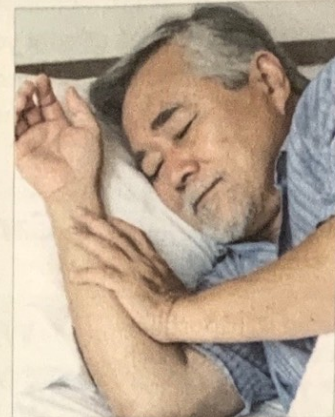
When adults watched TV ads depicting a group of people eating, they responded more favorably and gave the advertised foods higher ratings than when the ads showed one person eating alone. (The researchers played the ads in random order.)

What to do: Keep in mind that ads showing a group of people eating together may be more appealing.

J. Health Comm. 26: 773, 2021.



Sleep More, Eat Less?



A third of adults get less sleep than the 7 to 9 hours a night that experts recommend. Could lack of sleep help fuel the obesity epidemic?

Researchers randomly assigned 80 people with excess weight who typically slept less than 6½ hours a night either to continue their usual sleep routine or to receive individualized counseling to reach 8½ hours of sleep a night for two weeks.

Compared with the usual-sleep group, the group that received counseling averaged 1.2 more hours of sleep per night, ate 270 fewer calories per day, and lost two pounds.

What to do: Aim for 7 to 9 hours of sleep a night. There's no guarantee that getting enough sleep can help you eat less, but too little sleep may raise your risk of high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease, according to the American Heart Association. And drowsy driving is involved in an estimated 20 percent of fatal car crashes.

JAMA Intern. Med. 2022. doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2021.8098. *Circulation* 134: e367, 2016.

Unhealthy Foods: Scaling Up

People eat more when served larger portions. And portions have grown.

Researchers compared the current serving sizes of popular processed or fast foods to their original sizes. Among their findings:

5.9 oz. ("large"), and a soda (7 oz. in 1955) has ballooned to between 12 oz. ("extra small") and 30 oz. ("large").

Likewise, a bottle of Budweiser (7 oz. in 1976) now ranges from 7 to 40 oz., a bottle of Coca-Cola (6.5 oz. in 1916) ranges from 8 to 24 oz., and the size of a Nestlé Crunch bar (1.6 oz. in 1938) ranges from 1.6 to 4.4 oz.

What to do: Beware serving-size creep. Is "medium" your go-to? It may be yesterday's "large"...and tomorrow's "small." 🍎

Am. J. Public Health 111: 2223, 2021.



At McDonald's, a beef patty (1.6 oz. in 1955) now ranges from 1.6 to 8 oz., fries (2.4 oz. in 1955) range from 1.3 oz. ("kids") to