

## **EHC Newsletter** **March/April 2008**

### **CHEWING GUM – THE NEW HEALTH FOOD?**

During March as we celebrate National Nutrition Month, research is showing we may have a new health food – chewing gum!

Most Americans are aware that chewing sugar-free gum can help prevent tooth decay and freshen breath. Did you know, though, that new research is indicating that chewing gum may be used as a tool not only to help manage our weight but increase our focus, alertness and concentration and help relieve the everyday stresses of life?

Research has shown that chewing gum increases blood flow to the brain by 25 percent. A study published in 2002 showed that chewing gum appeared to improve people's ability to learn, retain and retrieve information.

Research studies have shown that chewing gum may help improve alertness and concentration and help relieve daily stresses such as driving in traffic or waiting in line. Many professional athletes and coaches are famous for chewing gum on the playing field. In schools today, some teachers are reversing school policies against chewing gum and encouraging their students to chew during tests. Psychiatrists and psychologists have suggested two of the reasons people chew gum are to relieve boredom and reduce tension. Chewing gum may help people release nervous energy and provide an outlet for frustration and irritation.

Emerging science suggests that there may be a link between a "healthy mouth and a healthy body." In fact, scientists are exploring how reducing unhealthy bacteria in the mouth may affect the overall health of the body. Chewing gum increases saliva, which is one of the most powerful defense mechanisms in the body. Chewing sugar-free gum can deliver many oral health benefits, including

helping to reduce plaque, reduce cavities, re-mineralize enamel to strengthen teeth and reduce and prevent stains on teeth.

Scientists at the Mayo Clinic have observed that chewing gum can actually burn about 11 calories per hour. Since sugar-free chewing gum counts as a “free” food in weight management food exchange lists, chewing gum can be a practical tool to help avoid mindless munching and help manage weight. An initial study published in 2007 found that chewing gum before a snack can help reduce hunger and decrease caloric intake. Additionally,

- ❖ Pop a piece of gum in your mouth to signal the end of a meal.
- ❖ Chew gum between meals when you are feeling the urge for high-calorie snacks.
- ❖ Chew gum while cooking to keep from nibbling during meal preparation.

What better way to make a small lifestyle change that fits easily into your busy schedule, helps manage your calorie intake, makes you more alert and focused and reduces tension and stress than chewing gum?

## HEALTH & NUTRITION WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE – BODY FAT

Excess body fat, no matter where it is on the body, is bad. But the worst place to have fat is deep inside the body and surrounding vital organs, such as liver and kidneys. This is called intra-abdominal or visceral fat. Excess intra-abdominal fat increases the risk of cardiovascular disease and diabetes and can raise insulin levels, which promote the growth of cancer cells. Postmenopausal women are particularly prone to store this type fat.

Visceral obesity is not necessarily linked to body shape, although “apple-shaped” people with more body fat on the upper body and around the abdomen are more at risk for serious illness than “pear shaped” individuals who carry excess fat on the lower body, buttocks and thighs. People who have high levels of intra-

abdominal fat may not even know it because the only accurate way to measure it is with expensive imaging procedures such as CT or MRI scans.

Many American women gain a pound or two each year after menopause, which increases health risks over a lifetime. But the good news is that, even if a woman exercises regularly and doesn't see a dramatic weight loss on her scales, she can feel confident that she is improving her health. A study published in the January 15, 2003, edition of the Journal of the American Medical Association provides evidence that moderate exercise can reduce intra-abdominal fat with no caloric restriction. The year-long study involved 173 previously-sedentary, overweight post-menopausal women. Half of the group was randomly assigned to a moderate-intensity, aerobic-exercise group, and half, who served as control group, attended a weekly hour-long stretching class. The exercise group lost between 3.4 percent and 6.9 percent intra-abdominal fat while the stretching group experienced a slight gain in intra-abdominal fat.

The great thing about exercise as a way to reduce total and intra-abdominal fat is that it can be done by most women at a low cost with low risk of side effects. The majority of the women in the study exercised by simply walking or bicycling—even on an indoor stationary bike. It's never too late to enjoy the benefits of exercise and lower the risk of chronic disease.

## CLUB NEWS

Oakland Promiseland Club recently shared book reports, quilts and bracelets during their monthly meeting. They had a total of 225 volunteer hours for January.

Patchwork also had a book report. Afterwards, they made plans for community service projects and assembled layettes. Patchwork logged a total of 605 volunteer hours.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 11-12	AEHC Officer Training
March 18	Ready, Set, Graduate
March 26	Board Meeting
April 30	Board Meeting
May 6	Spring Council - TBA
May 16	Body Walk - Guy Berry
May 28	Board Meeting
June 10-12	AEHC State Meeting
June 25	Board Meeting

**THINK SPRING!!!**

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University of Arkansas, United States Department of Agriculture and County Governments Cooperating.

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