

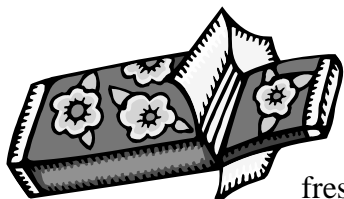
Lincoln County Homemakers' News and Clues

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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 to 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 are 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.

Did you know that since World War II, the U.S. Armed Forces have supplied chewing gum to military personnel to help increase soldiers' alertness, improve their oral health and ease the tension of combat?

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, reducing cavities, re-mineralizing enamel to strengthen teeth and reducing and preventing 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 to 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, which Americans named as their number one snack choice in 2005?



Incredible Edible Egg!



This month, as we celebrate Easter, we will think of eggs. As we prepare our eggs, whether for dyeing, stuffing or for salads, we need to remember that they are a potentially hazardous food. They are capable of supporting the rapid growth of disease-causing bacteria such as salmonella.

The shell of an egg is very porous and can permit bacteria to penetrate. Most commercial egg producers lightly coat their eggs with a thin spray coating of mineral oil to close the pores against contamination. Cooking the egg in the shell, however, removes that barrier so that your hard-cooked eggs are again prone to contamination unless you protect them by proper handling.

Cleanliness is the key! You should wash your hands with hot, soapy water before handling eggs and at every preparation step, including cooking, cooling, dyeing, chopping or stuffing. Kitchen surfaces and cooking equipment should also receive the same careful cleaning. Otherwise, cross contamination can spread bacteria from one food or surface to another.

Raw eggs with cracked shells should always be thrown away immediately. However, even eggs with clean, un-cracked shells can be contaminated with bacteria. Proper cooking, though, will destroy any harmful bacteria.

Eggs should be kept refrigerated until time to cook them. Store eggs on a shelf inside the refrigerator, not on the refrigerator door, so they stay fully chilled. Hard-cooked eggs should never sit out un-refrigerated for more than two hours.

The American Egg Board recommends this method for boiling the perfect egg: place eggs in a single layer in a saucepan, add water to at least one inch above the eggs. Cover pan and bring water to a quick boil. Turn the heat off. If necessary, remove the pan from the burner to prevent further boiling. Let eggs stand, covered, in the hot water for 18 minutes for extra large eggs, 15 minutes for large, or 12 minutes for medium eggs. Immediately run cold water over the eggs. When they are cool enough to handle, place them in an uncovered container in the refrigerator where they can air-dry.

Whatever the style of preparation, eggs should always be well cooked. The Food and Drug Administration recommends cooking eggs until both the yolk and the white are firm. By doing this, any salmonella or other harmful bacteria that may be in the eggs will be destroyed.

So, at Easter or anytime during the year, enjoy this small wonder – the ***Incredible Edible Egg!***



On February 7, *Lincoln County Extension Homemakers* **Mary Lou Mahurin, Ernestine Austin, Jean Stewart, Oleta Calhoun and Evelyn Glover** (*pictured here*), along with **Stacie Blundell** and **Gale Patrick**, were joined by Red Cross volunteers **Angela Murray**, her daughter **LaGena Bailey, Cora Moore, Wanda Steed** and **Lorena Harrison** as they hand-made 36 cuddle animals for the Lincoln County chapter of the American Red Cross. Many thanks go to these women for the joy and comfort these adorable stuffed animals will bring, when they are given by Red Cross volunteers to children involved in accidents, home fires or natural disasters.



The *Lincoln County Extension Homemakers* also want to welcome new members **Cora Moore** and **Lorena Harrison!**

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