

Nutrition misinfo widespread

By Charles Blackburn
Duke Univ. Medical Center
"Avoid excesses and enjoy yourself," might be a good maxim to follow where nutrition is concerned, according to Mary Bernheim, professor emerita of biochemistry at Duke University Medical Center. She was moderator for a recent forum at Duke dealing with nutrition and health.

Joining her for the discussion were Helen Guthrie, professor and head of the nutrition program at Pennsylvania State University, and Henry Kamin, Duke professor of biochemistry and chairman of the National Academy of Science's committee on dietary allowances.

Also on the panel were Dr. Sue Kimm, Duke professor of pediatrics and acting chief of the nutrition section of the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, and Jacqueline Reynolds, Duke professor of physiology and a member of the National Academy of Science's committee on nutrition in medical education.

The panelists lamented the amount of misinformation the public receives on nutrition. It was noted that medical school graduates are not always prepared to answer their patients' questions about nutrition, hence the need for more formalized training.

Health Tips

"Human nutrition is an intensely difficult subject because of the variables involved," Bernheim said. "Genetic differences may well be the most important consideration. But we do know that we should eat everything in moderation."

Kamin agreed, adding that there appears to be virtue in variety where diet is concerned. "The greater variety, the better the chances are that you'll get an adequate amount of the Recommended Dietary Allowances as formulated by the Food and Nutrition Board of the National Academy of Sciences."

There are some notable exceptions to the rule, he said. It is now widely believed that Americans as a whole do not get enough calcium or iron in their diets. Kamin said calcium deficiency has been linked to osteoporosis, or loss of bone mass, a problem that primarily affects women in later life.

In general, however, hypochondria is the main problem with nutrition in America, he said. "There seems to be a widely held belief that a change in diet will somehow change one's life," Kamin said. "As a consequence,

people come up with these odd diets that have little solid nutritional foundation."

He blamed acceptance of dietary misinformation on the public's lack of a basic understanding of the principles involved. As a short course on nutrition, he recommended the ninth edition of the Recommended Dietary Allowances, published in 1980.

Guthrie elaborated on some of the odd dietary supplements in vogue at health food stores. She said the industry seems to be thriving mainly because people have come to believe they can't be adequately fed at the grocery store.

"People are ascribing magical properties to foods," she said.

Kimm agreed that some people have taken an almost pagan view of food. "They seek some sort of spiritual purity in their diet, but what is so spiritual about a granola bar?" she asked. "We've become a nation obsessed with food. It has many connotations. We don't eat merely to live. We eat for pleasure, socialization, religious and cultural reasons."

"As long as there is widespread interest in nutrition, the public will be bombarded with misinformation, and the parade of fallacies will march on," Kimm said.



Hard work

Kindergarten to third grade Hoke County teachers and aides work on teaching skills during a workshop held recently at the Hoke County Library. The workshop was designed to give participants "hands-on" visual art activities using

materials found in the regular classroom. Shown here from left are: Jane Johnson, Carmen Shaw, Barbara Walters, Marie Ellis, Brenda Edwards, Linda Richards, and Cathy Morgan. Thirty-six teachers and aides took part in the workshop.

Census Bureau conducting survey

The Bureau of the Census is conducting the Point of Purchase Survey in Hoke County at the request of the Bureau of Labor Statistics to determine which stores and establishments Americans use most frequently to purchase certain goods and services.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics will use this information to update the sample of establishments needed to price selected items for the Consumer Price index.

The index is a monthly statistic that provides a measure of price changes for items purchased by consumers.

Joann Plummer is heading up the survey in the county.

Previously, the Bureau of Labor Statistics revised the list of

establishments needed to price items for the Consumer Price Index only once every 10 years, resulting in an index update only once during that time period.

In recent years, however, rapidly changing consumer buying habits and preferences have demonstrated the need for more frequent revisions to the index than in the past.

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A Census Bureau interviewer, who will show official identification, will visit residents soon to ask questions about certain items you

may have purchased.

Because this is a scientifically selected sample survey, answers will represent not only one household but hundreds of other households.

For this reason, participation in this voluntary survey is extremely important to ensure the quality and accuracy of the final results.

Although there are no penalties for failure to answer any questions, each unanswered question reduces the quality of the final data.

Washing clothes in cold water takes only 7% of the electrical energy required for clothes washed in hot water.

Start exercise at slow, gradual pace

With the return of mild spring weather, many people who've been inactive all winter suddenly get the itch to exercise.

The North Carolina Medical Society certainly agrees that exercise is good, but the Society notes that it's not wise to burst into vigorous exercise without adequate conditioning.

Attempting to run, 10 miles after an inactive winter can lead to sore muscles, discouragement, or worse. Whatever form of exercise you like, it's important to resume it gradually.

Run, bike, or swim shorter distances at first.

Slowly lengthen the amount of time you allow yourself for tennis and other vigorous games. Don't begin your spring exercise regime with such zeal that soreness and fatigue prompt you to drop it completely.

Always pay attention to what your body is telling you. If you feel a great deal of discomfort, you are trying to do too much. Ease up a bit, or take a break and start again at another time. Be alert to unusual symptoms such as chest

pain, breathlessness, joint discomfort, or muscle cramps.

Jogging is not for everyone, and it may be dangerous for those who have unsuspected heart disease. Many older people enjoy exercise such as walking, swimming, and bicycle riding. Modified aerobic dancing, calisthenics, and yoga are other possibilities.

It's abundantly clear that regular exercise had many health benefits, but if you're generally inactive during the winter, don't burst into exercise just because the flowers burst into bloom.

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