

PENNY SAVER NEWS

FAX: 932-5261

February 21, 2008

BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.
Food, Nutrition and Health Agent

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

5339 S. County Road 579

Seffner, FL 33584-3334

PH:(813)744-5519 x 136, FAX:744-5776
e-mail:mkeith@ufl.edu

Is Overweight Okay?!

Is it really healthier to be overweight, as some people interpreted the recent report from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)? How wonderful! But what about the reports from the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR), which found the opposite? Whoops! Who do we believe, and why?

What they said was this. The CDC says that *overweight* people are slightly less likely to die from Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, infections and lung disease. CDC also says that *obese* people are more likely to die from cancer, especially of the breast, kidneys, esophagus (throat), pancreas and colon. AICR says that even a little bit of weight gain raises our risks of many cancers, including all the ones CDC mentioned as well as uterine cancer.

Notice that there's a difference in their reports on what they're counting. CDC was counting how many people died from these diseases, AIRC counted how many people got cancers. And AIRC was only looking at cancer, not other diseases. So, do you care more about living with cancer, or just whether you die from it? Most of us would rather not get it in the first place!

Next, remember there's a difference between overweight and obese. These are medically determined by your BMI or Body Mass Index. You can go to the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute website for a calculator (<nhlbisupport.com/bmi>), or if you know your weight and height, figure it out for yourself. Divide your height in inches

into your weight. Divide it again. Multiply that by 703. The result is your BMI. A BMI between 18.5 and 25 is “normal”. If it’s over 30, that’s in the “obese” category. In between is “overweight”. A person 5 feet 4 inches tall is overweight at 146 pounds, and obese at 175 or more pounds.

So look again at the reports. If we’re overweight but not obese we have less chances of dying from Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, infections or lung disease. But even if we’re overweight, and certainly if we’re obese, we have higher chances of dying of a whole list of cancers. Surely we also know that carrying those extra pounds around increases our chances of having arthritis and joint pains, of needing to watch our diets because we have high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol problems or other related diseases. Does it depend on which diseases each of us is most afraid of?

There’s one more thing to add to this discussion - how fit are we? How strong are our heart and lungs? How much exercise can we do, and how long can we do it, before we’re out of breath and panting? It is possible to be overweight, even obese, and still be able to do a lot of exercise, to be ‘fit’. And this seems to be very important, because fit people, no matter what their weight category is, live longer. An overweight person who stays in shape will probably live longer than a thin person who is not in shape. Death rates for fit seniors were half those of same-age folks who were not fit.

No matter our body size, we can choose our foods carefully. Limit the fats, eat lots of fruits and vegetables, chose whole grains and low fat milk. And there is always some kind of exercise we can do. If you can’t run, walk. If you can’t walk, swim. Lift cans of peaches while you watch TV. Don’t sit to talk on the phone, pace back and forth. Sweep the house more often. Pull more weeds in the yard. Go to the park and

swing on the swings. Just move!

Here's a quick and easy recipe for dinner. It has veggies, whole grain and dairy all in one dish. Leftovers are just as tasty too. Only cook the spinach until it's bright green and wilted, don't let it get brown. For a 1-dish meal, add 1 cup of cooked shrimp or chopped cooked chicken.

Cheesy Spinach and Rice

3/4 C chopped onion	1 clove minced garlic
1 Tbsp margarine or olive oil	5 C fresh spinach (1 bag ready to eat)
2 eggs, or equivalent egg product	2 C cooked brown rice or bulgur wheat
1/2 C skim milk	1 Tbsp low sodium soy sauce
1 C shredded low fat sharp cheddar cheese	Drops of hot sauce if desired

Preheat oven to 350° F. Grease a casserole dish with a little oil. Saute the onions and garlic in the oil until they're soft. Add the spinach. Stir it for 2 minutes, until it's wilted. Stir in all the other ingredients and spread in the casserole dish. Bake for 35 minutes. Serves 4 - 6.

Hillsborough County Extension is a cooperative service of the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners and the University of Florida.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an Equal Employment Opportunity - Affirmative Action Employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap or national origin. COOPERATIVE EXTENSION IN AGRICULTURE, HOME ECONOMICS, STATE OF FLORIDA, IFAS, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, AND BOARDS OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COOPERATING