

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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That's the latest advice for health and nutrition from the medical research world - Pay Attention! As if there wasn't so much stuff going on around us all ready, so many things to try to remember, now they want us to pay more attention? Well, if we want to manage our weight, if we want to avoid the health problems that go with poor food choices, that does seem to be what they're saying.

Here's what the doctors did. They gave some people numbers to remember, things like 27, or 765893. Others had papers. Then they asked each one to walk down the hall and report those numbers or give the papers to another person. That sounds easy enough, right? But the trick was that, in the hall, they were interrupted by someone offering them snacks. They could choose a cup of fruit salad or a piece of chocolate cake.

The people who had to remember numbers, and the ones with the bigger numbers, mostly chose cake. The ones who didn't have something to remember more often chose fruit salad. The point is that the more distracted we are, the more likely we are to make poor food choices. How does that translate into our homes and daily lives? Think about how we cook and how we eat.

Do you often find yourself in the kitchen, standing in front of the refrigerator, phone tucked under your ear, trying to decide what to have for dinner? The more distracted we are by the conversation we're having, the less likely it is that we'll chose a balanced dinner. We're more likely to grab either what's easy, quick or what just 'looks

good' than to think about getting enough vegetables. We'll grab the box of mac 'n cheese instead of the box of brown rice. Like the study, we'll go for cake instead of fruit.

Besides affecting what we cook, think about the other times we eat. It seems that people who eat dinner while watching TV or listening to the evening news are less likely to watch their portion sizes. You might serve yourself one spoonful, but 'Gee, it tastes so good', so you take another, and another. You're not paying attention, and pretty soon you've had half the bowlful. While half a cup of rice, even healthy brown rice, has a reasonable 108 calories, if we eat 2 cups of rice we get almost 450 calories.

Even having dinner with friends in a restaurant can do this to us. The waiter brings the bread and butter or the little dish of (high calorie) olive oil. We're talking, enjoying the company, and before we know it the bread basket is empty and the oil dish is dry! We didn't even realize we were eating most of it. But now it's gone, and we'll have to work extra hard on the exercise machine to get it off of our hips. Ouch!

How many of us end the evening in front of the TV with a snack? One of the first pieces of advice for TV snackers is to divide the big bags of snacks into smaller bags in the kitchen. Why? Because when we put a full bag beside us, by the time the program is over, the bag is likely to be empty! When we're paying so much attention to the show, our brains don't pay attention to what we're eating. Our brains don't pay attention to the messages coming from our stomachs that say "I'm full!". We just keep on watching and munching! Apparently our brains do not multi-task nearly as well as we thought they could.

So, what can we do? Pay attention! If we take the time on the weekend to plan our meals through the week, we won't have to make quick decisions before dinner.

Write your plans down, stick them on the refrigerator, and check them. Turn off the TV and pay attention to what's on your plate. Ask the waiter to not bring bread to the table. Or take one piece and ask the waiter to take the rest away. That way it's not there to tempt you while your brain is distracted.

Here's an easy recipe for dinner. Stick it in the oven while you watch the evening news, then enjoy it without distraction. It will go well with glazed carrots or Harvard beets and brown rice.

### Lemon-Pepper Chops

6 thin-sliced pork chops, trimmed of fat	2 fresh lemons, thinly sliced
1 medium onion, thinly sliced	1 green pepper, sliced
2 cups tomato juice	

Preheat oven to 350° F. Place chops in baking dish. Sprinkle the lemon, onion and pepper slices over chops. Pour tomato juice over all. Cover tightly with foil and bake 1 hour or until center of a chop measures 160° F. Serves 6.

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