

Lifewire: Portion control and weight loss

by Ven_Griva

Table settings account for more than style and taste. Using the right bowls and plates could help curb the nation's diabetes and obesity epidemics, a Canadian study indicates.

A plate and a cereal bowl with markers for proper portion sizes appear to help obese patients with diabetes lose weight and decrease their use of glucose-controlling medications, says a report published June 25 in the Archives of Internal Medicine.

Between 1960 and 2000, the proportion of U.S. adults who were obese increased from 13.4 percent to 30.9 percent, according to statistics gathered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. Most cases of type 2 diabetes can be attributed directly to obesity, the CDC and other research says.

Portion control is crucial to weight loss, which in diabetics has been clinically linked to improved blood sugar control. Yet it is a difficult task for diabetics, who must overcome societal cues to supersize their meals.

"The increasing prevalence of obesity is paralleled by increasing portion sizes in the marketplace," the authors write. "Portion sizes are an important determinant of energy intake; the number of calories ingested by subjects at a meal has been directly correlated with the serving size offered."

In 2004, Dr. Sue D. Pedersen of the University of Calgary in Alberta, Canada, conducted a six-month trial of commercially available portion control plates and bowls involving 130 obese, type 2 diabetes patients with an average age of 56.

The plates were divided into sections for carbohydrates, proteins, cheese and sauce, with the rest left open for vegetables. The sections approximately totaled an 800-calorie meal for men and a 650-calorie meal for women. The bowl allowed a 200-calorie meal of cereal and milk.

Half the study participants in the double-blind study were assigned to use the plate for their largest meal and the bowl when they ate cereal for breakfast. The remaining half received usual care, which consisted of dietary assessment and counseling from dietitians.

After six months, those using the portion-control dishes lost an average of 1.8 percent of their body weight, while those receiving usual care lost an average of 0.1 percent. A significantly larger proportion of those using

the dishes - 16.9 percent vs. 4.6 percent - lost at least 5 percent of their body weight.

A 5 percent weight loss has been shown to significantly decrease cancer, stroke and heart attack, the authors write.

You can find portion-control plates and bowls online at the American Diabetes Association Web site at store.diabetes.org.

BRAIN FOOD

As time goes by all of us experience the effects of aging, including an inevitable decline in mental function.

However, there are certain nutrients you can include in your daily diet that will help keep your mind sharp, says a nutrition expert at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas.

To keep your mind sharp, eat foods rich in iron, zinc, niacin, thiamin and vitamins B6 and B12, said Lona Sandon, assistant professor of clinical nutrition.

Studies show that these nutrients benefit brain development and function. Deficiencies can hamper brain function and cause mood disturbances, confusion, poor concentration, easy agitation and nerve-cell damage that make extremities numb.

"If you're deficient, improved dietary intake of these minerals can improve alertness and concentration when normal blood levels are reached," Sandon said.

Sandon lists a few foods rich in these important nutrients:

- Iron: Beef, fish, leafy vegetables and poultry.

- Zinc: Beans, cereals, grains, nuts, oysters and whole-grain breads.

- Niacin: Beef, carrots, fish, grains, leafy vegetables, milk, nuts, poultry and tomatoes.

- Thiamin: Some beans, beef, breads, grains, nuts, peas, pork and spinach.

- Vitamin B6: Bananas, fish, green beans, liver, nuts and poultry.

- Vitamin B12: Beef, eggs, fortified cereals, liver, milk and shellfish.

Sandon also touts the benefits of omega-3 fatty acids, which are found primarily in cold-water fish such as salmon, flaxseed oil, olive oil and walnuts. Omega-3 is essential to proper growth and development of the brain and spinal cord.

In the end, a simple plan can help keep a person's mind working like a steel trap.

"Eat a healthy, balanced diet, get regular exercise, and get plenty of rest," Sandon said.

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