



FALL WEEK 4

Promoting Physical Activity and Fruit & Vegetable Tracking with a Fun Team Support Environment and Friendly Competition

State Coordinator Denise Smith
desmith@uwyo.edu
307-334-3534

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WALKING HAS BEEN SHOWN TO IMPROVE BRAIN FUNCTION

Source: Jenna Birch - Health and Lifestyle Journalist, blog.fitbit.com

The general wellness perks of getting fresh air and exercise might be reason enough for you to tie up your shoes and get some steps. But here's more good news about walking: a new study shows walking can benefit the brain. In research findings presented at Experimental Biology 2017, scientists found that the foot-to-ground impacts created during a walk may send pressure waves surging through your arteries, and ultimately increase the amount of blood sent to the brain.

Foot Impact Increases Blood Flow to the Brain

Previously, researchers weren't really sure how much movement affected blood flow. Using ultrasound to measure internal carotid artery blood velocity waves, as well as arterial diameters to determine blood flow to both brain hemispheres, they were able to see what sorts of exercise mattered most. In 12 adult participants, they saw running increased blood flow to the brain more than walking, but walking was better than cycling, so *foot impact* made a difference.

Walking may be one of the simplest exercises around, but it can lead to significant health gains. According to Lynn Cialdella Kam, PhD, an assistant professor in the Department of Nutrition at

Case Western Reserve University's School of Medicine, a lot of the concerns affecting heart impact also affect brain health. "Brain health and blood flow can be altered by the inflammation associated with obesity, by hypertension, by glucose intolerance and more," she explains.

Blood oxygenates vessels, which prevents cell death, improves cognitive functioning, and keeps conditions like dementia at bay. If the brain isn't "breathing" well enough, you may see long-term problems. "Those health issues, that can affect the delivery of blood to the brain, may lead to more concerns like cognitive decline or stroke," Kam says. Simply walking on a regular basis can help counter those problems.

Walking May Improve Cognitive Functioning

In addition, Kam says walking and exercise may increase levels of a critical protein in the brain called brain-derived neurotrophic factor (or BDNFs). "These BDNFs play a big role in the development of within-cell communications in the brain," she explains. "If you can increase BDNFs, you can improve your cognitive functioning."

Kam also thinks it's impossible to dismiss the mental wellness effects of walking and regular exercise—even if you're not training for a marathon, trying to make an Olympic team or in any way intense about it. "That change of pace, in taking a walk, can take you out of your regular environment and help you feel better," she says. "You also get a rush of 'feel good' chemicals. People always talk about dopamine, but there's also serotonin and norepinephrine." That hormonal cocktail is like a calming, energizing pick-me-up shot that can power you through the remainder of your day.

Walk for 30 Minutes a Day, 5 Days a Week

So, walk. It's easy, requires no equipment, and science is continuing to prove the endless ways stepping can benefit body and mind. "The standard recommendation is 30 minutes a day, five days a week, of moderate intensity exercise-of which walking would fit," says Kam. "Just that, and you can feel like you're doing something good for yourself, for your body, and making healthy choices. From a well-being perspective, feeling stronger and more capable can also lead to a higher quality of life."

This article is not intended to substitute for informed medical advice. You should not use this information to diagnose or treat a health problem or condition. Always check with your doctor before changing your diet, altering your sleep habits, taking supplements, or starting a new fitness routine.



10 HEALTHY FALL FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Source: Melissa Bess, former Nutrition and Health Education Specialist, University of Missouri Extension

Some fruits and vegetables are easier to come by in the summer months, but a good variety is available in the fall and winter as well. It's important to include fruits and vegetables in your diet year-round to stay healthy and ward off diseases. Here are some of the superstar fruits and vegetables of the fall and winter months.

1. **Sweet Potatoes.** They are loaded with beta carotene (which the body makes into vitamin A), vitamin C, potassium, fiber, iron and vitamin B6. Sweet potatoes have more nutrients than regular white potatoes and can replace white potatoes in some recipes. Try them mashed, baked or as a dessert.
2. **Apples.** Apples are a traditional fall favorite and are easy to find in the supermarket or you can pick your own at a nearby orchard. They are a quick, easy snack and can be paired with peanut butter or cheese for protein. Apples contain antioxidants, which may help protect against certain cancers and reduce levels of LDL or bad cholesterol. Apples have vitamin C, vitamin K and fiber. Remember the old saying, "an apple a day keeps the doctor away."
3. **Broccoli.** This is one vegetable that can be eaten raw or cooked, hot or cold, by itself or with other foods. Broccoli can help prevent cancer and heart disease, and boost the immune system. Nutrients in broccoli include vitamin C, vitamin A, vitamin B6, iron, calcium, magnesium and vitamin E.
4. **Pumpkin.** Pumpkin is a great source of potassium and beta carotene, a powerful antioxidant that is good for the eyes. Canned or prepared fresh, pumpkin can be made into a variety of soups, baked goods and desserts.
5. **Kiwi.** This fruit can be eaten alone (after peeling) or can be added to many different dishes, including soups, salads and desserts. Kiwi contains antioxidants, which can help protect the eyes, heart and colon. Kiwi also provides vitamin C, fiber, potassium, magnesium and vitamin E.
6. **Avocado.** Avocados contain healthy monounsaturated fat. Even healthy fat is a dense source of energy, so it's important to eat avocados in moderation. They also contain vitamin E, fiber, potassium, folate and vitamin C. Avocados can be used on sandwiches or salads, or made into guacamole.
7. **Green beans.** Green beans are high in vitamin K which protects red blood cells and helps reduce the severity of asthma, osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. They also contain vitamin C, potassium, folate, iron and magnesium. Green beans can be served as a side dish or used in salads, soups or casseroles.
8. **Spinach.** Dark green veggies contain a variety of nutrients a healthy body needs. Spinach is packed with vitamin A, vitamin K, iron, folate, magnesium, vitamin C, calcium, potassium, fiber and vitamin E. Spinach also has antioxidants and anti-cancer agents. Frozen or fresh spinach can be added to just about any meal. Try using it on pizza or lasagna, or use it instead of lettuce in a salad.
9. **Pears.** They are a good source of fiber, antioxidants and vitamin C. Research suggests that regularly eating pears and other fruits may guard against macular degeneration. Pears seldom cause allergies and are usually safe for infants and small children.
10. **Winter Squash.** It contains fiber, potassium, iron and vitamin A. Vitamin A helps ensure healthy skin, hair, vision and bones. Winter squash can be mashed, used in breads, desserts and soups, or as a snack or side dish.

Try a new recipe using one or more of the superstar fall fruits and vegetables!

THE FOOD YOU EAT CAN BE EITHER THE SAFEST AND MOST POWERFUL
FORM OF MEDICINE OR THE SLOWEST FORM OF POISON
ANN WIGMORE

BEEF, APPLE AND PEAR STEW

Source: Dining with Diabetes WVUES, 2000

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 2/3 cup chopped onion
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 small carrots, cut into 1" pieces
- 1 pound of lean stew beef, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 2 cups low-fat, low-sodium beef broth
- 1/2 teaspoon paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1 large pear and 1 large apple, unpeeled and chopped into 1-inch pieces

Directions

1. Heat the oil in stockpot over medium-high heat.
2. Add the onion and garlic and saute for 5 minutes.
3. Add carrots and saute for another 5 minutes.
4. Add the meat and brown.
5. Drain off any accumulate fat.
6. Add the broth, paprika and pepper.
7. Bring to a boil over high heat.
8. Reduce heat and simmer uncovered for 30 minutes.
9. Add the apple and pear chunks; cover.
10. Cook over low heat for 15-20 minutes until the apples and pears are soft, but not mushy. The stew should reach 165 F.

FIT-EX AND BEYOND

By now you are probably a physical activity-scheduling and negative self-talk-stopping expert. That is fantastic! And you are almost half way to your FitEx goal! It may be a good time to start thinking about rewarding yourself for your physical activity dedication. There's nothing like being able to reward yourself for something you've done really well.

STEP #4

As you schedule and follow through on your physical activity sessions, you can also schedule some rewards for yourself when you reach personal milestones. The rewards can be little or big. That is up to you. If you can afford to reward yourself with a Hawaiian holiday, well, we won't stop you. Or if you're like the rest of us, maybe you will consider a shopping spree or catching the latest movies.

Everyone has different ways of rewarding themselves. Some people go out to eat while others rent a movie and allow themselves popcorn and M&M's. It's probably best to avoid unhealthy behaviors as a reward for your newly found activity and healthy eating behaviors. Find something that really trips your trigger and reward yourself with it. It may even help as a positive thought for the thought stopping procedure you learned last week.