

# NewsBriefs

## **To Reduce Stress, Eat a Cupcake?**

Dr. Norman Pecoraro, a researcher at the University of California at San Francisco, claims that rats have a biologic basis for overeating in the face of chronic stress. He believes that, “If you are overly stressed, it’s probably a good idea to overeat, at least in the short run”. There are two types of biologic stress: acute and chroni.

**Acute** occurs when a single event sends messages to the body’s adrenal glands to pump out stress hormones. Once the event is over, the elevated stress hormones interact with brain receptors to shut off the loop.

In **chronic** stress, the adrenal gland is continuously pumping out stress hormones. Until the University of California San Francisco study, no one knew how chronic stress was turned off.

In the study, rats were exposed to chronic stress. The rats were then fed sugar, and their stress hormone levels declined. The mechanism involves

abdominal fat, energy-rich food, and pleasure centers in the brain. In rats, stress hormones are also responsible for increasing deposits of fat in the abdomen. It looks like a catch-22, large deposits of adominal fat may increase risk of certain chronic diseases but also help alleviate the perils of chronic stress. (NY Times, September 16, 2003.)

*[Source: Nutrition Today, Vol. 38, No. 6, November/December, 2003.]*

## **Calcium and Children**

The parents of growing children need to be aware of new calcium recommendations of the Food and Nutrition Board, National Academy of Sciences. For children and teenagers the recommended dietary allowances for calcium range from 800 mg a day for 4- to 8-year-olds, to 1300 mg a day for 9- to 18-year-olds. To meet these needs, children should consume three to four servings of low-fat milk products every day.

*[Source: Nutrition Today, Vol. 38, No. 6, November/December, 2003.]*

## Long-Term Use of Multivitamins May Protect Against Colon Cancer

An article published in the American Journal of Epidemiology looked at the relationship between multivitamin use and the incidence of colon cancer. A total of 145,260 men and women enrolled in the Cancer Prevention Study II Nutrition Cohort were asked about their multivitamin use. Looking at this data and data from the same participants enrolled in a study completed 10 years earlier, the authors concluded that regular multivitamin use (4 or more times per week) was not associated with a decreased risk of colorectal cancer (rate ratio = 1.04, 95% confidence interval).

However, previous multivitamin use did reduce risk (rate ratio = .71, 95% confidence interval). Whether multivitamin use decreases the risk of colorectal cancer has not been studied in randomized studies.

[Source: *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 2003; 158:621-628.]

## Don't Sit Still

It's not just exercise, but other movement (standing, walking, talking, fidgeting, etc.), that keeps some people lean. For 10 days, researchers tracked the posture and the movements made by 10 lean and 10 mildly obese people, all self-proclaimed "couch potatoes."

The results: the big potatoes stayed seated for about 2½ hours longer per day than the small potatoes. That means the obese group burned about 350 fewer calories a day – a difference that translate into 33 pounds a year.

Alas, it's not so easy to change. For two months, the researchers put seven members of the obese group on a diet (they lost 18 pounds) and overfed the lean folks (they gained 9 pounds). Losing or gaining weight made no difference in how much either group moved, sat or stood.

**What to do:** If you're overweight, keep moving. Walk rather than ride. Don't sit when you can stand and keep moving when you have to sit. Move to the music from your car radio. Lift weights or do sit-ups while you watch TV, etc.

[Source: *Nutrition Action*, Vol. 32, No. 3, April 2005.]

## Stones and Pounds

How many extra pounds increase your odds of getting a kidney stone? The risk is significantly higher in men who gain about 25 pounds since around age 20 (compared to those who gain no weight).

The risk also rises if your waist measures at least 37 inches (men or younger women) or at least 31 inches (older women). Risk increases further as you add more pounds or inches.

**What to do:** Lose excess weight, but not too quickly. Rapid weight loss can increase the risk of kidney stones.

## Safe Microwaving

### Cooking and Reheating

- Arrange food evenly in the dish and add some liquid if needed. Cover with a loose lid to let any steam escape. (If you use plastic wrap, make sure it does not come in contact with the food.)
- Do not cook large cuts of meat on high power (100%). Use medium power (50%) and a longer cooking time, so the heat can reach the center without overcooking the outer areas.
- If your microwave does not have a carousel, stir or rotate the food midway through the microwaving time.
- If you are partially cooking food in the microwave before you finish it on the grill or in a conventional oven, transfer the microwaved food immediately. Warm, partially cooked food is a breeding ground for bacteria.
- Use a food thermometer or the oven's temperature probe to verify that meat, poultry, and casseroles have reached a safe temperature. Place the thermometer in the thickest area of the meat or poultry – not near fat or bone – and in the innermost part of the thigh of whole poultry. Check in several places to be sure red meat reaches 160°F, poultry reaches 180°F, and egg casseroles reach 160°F. Fish should flake with a fork. Leftovers should reach 165°F.
- Food continues to cook after the microwave is turned off, as heat flows from hotter to cooler regions. So allow dense foods like meat, poultry, quiche, and casseroles to stand for five minutes before you check the internal temperature. Foods that are not dense – cut vegetables, bread, soup, and beverages, for example – do not need to stand.
- Do not cook whole, stuffed poultry in the microwave. The stuffing might not reach the temperature needed to destroy harmful bacteria.
- Heat ready-to-eat foods like hot dogs, fully cooked ham, and leftovers until they're steaming hot.

### Defrosting

- Remove food from its packaging before you defrost it in the microwave. Foam trays and plastic wraps can melt, which can cause potentially harmful chemicals to migrate into the food.
- If you have defrosted meat, poultry, egg casseroles, or fish in the microwave, cook immediately.

[Source: *Nutrition Action HealthLetter*, April 2005.]