

SportsNutrition

Nancy Clark, MS, RD
1300 Boylston St., Brookline, MA 02467

www.nancyclarkrd.com
617-795-1875

THE ATHLETE'S KITCHEN

As an athlete, you are likely lean and fit. But with more than 60% of Americans being overweight or obese, you undoubtedly know someone who struggles with how to shed undesired body fat. At the American Dietetic Association's annual convention (October '07, Philadelphia), nutrition researchers presented alternatives to the standard "eat less and exercise more" diet advice. Here's some food for thought on non-dieting ways to tackle weight problems.

Curbing the Obesity Epidemic Denver's Dr. James Hill believes we need to focus on stopping weight gain, as opposed to advocating for weight loss. One simple way to limit weight gain is to eat 100 to 200 fewer calories at the end of the day. This small calorie deficit contrasts to standard diets that severely restrict calories and are no fun. People on strict diets tend to stop losing weight after six months. Hill believes they dislike the drudgery of always being on a diet.

Yet, during the first 6 months of dieting, most dieters create new health habits—such as regular exercise—that they maintain. Exercise helps prevent (or reduce) weight regain. Surveys with "successful losers" indicate they include exercise as a part of their daily routine. For some, exercise offers spiritual benefits. For others, it provides a handy opportunity to socialize with friends. Some diet-and-exercisers even become "athletes." (Sound familiar to anyone you know?)

Dr. Hill also recommends we address the obesity epidemic by changing the way people think about weight. For example, Denver wants to become known as "America's Healthiest City." City leaders are working to create a culture where healthy eating and daily activity are the sustainable norm. Healthier employees will hopefully attract businesses to Denver because of lower healthcare costs. For health promotion strategies, visit <http://aom.americaonthe move.org> and www.zyozy.com.

Curbing Mindless Eating Dr. Brian Wansink PhD of Cornell University's Food and Brand Lab is campaigning to end mindless eating. You know, munching entire tubs of popcorn without even being hungry. Nibbling on M&Ms while waiting for someone. Unknowingly finishing the kid's leftovers. Just 100 extra mindless calories a day can contribute to gaining ten pounds of undesired body fat a year.

Dr. Wansink recommends we curb weight gain by making mindful decisions about the calories that end up in our mouths. Wansink reported we make about 250 food decisions a day. We decide not only what we eat (turkey or tuna sandwich? lowfat or regular mayo?), but also how much (half or whole sandwich?). He has determined that we eat 92% of what we serve ourselves. We generally stop eating when our plate is empty. That means, we eat with our eyes, not with our stomachs! Think about it: When do you stop eating? Chances are, you stop eating when your plate is

Weight Reduction Tips from the American Dietetic Association

empty (or when the TV show ends). We don't always stop when our stomach signals it is *full*.

To prove this point, Wansink masterminded an interesting experiment with a refillable soup bowl that never emptied. (It was refilled via hidden tubing connected to a big soup pot.) Compared to the group who ate from standard bowls, the 30 adults who (unknowingly) ate from the refillable bowls consumed about 73% more soup. And believe it or not, they did not rate themselves as feeling any more full. (How can you be full if the bowl still has half the soup in it???) Only two people realized the bowl refilled—one dropped his napkin (and noticed the tubing); the other tried to pick up the bowl. (Surprise!)

Wansink created another experiment to determine if serving size influences the amount of food a person eats. He arranged for a movie theater to announce "everyone gets free popcorn and soda today because it's Illinois History Month." The movie-goers were given five-day old popcorn (yucky). Yet, even though the popcorn tasted bad, the people still ate 35% more when they were given a big bucket compared to a smaller bucket. They mindlessly ate the stale slowly (in contrast to a previous experiment in which the movie-goers quickly devoured fresh popcorn).

Based on these and other experiments, Wansink believes a simple way to cut calories (and control weight) is to buy smaller bowls, plates, and also glasses. He reports you'll drink less if you pour your beverage into a tall, thin glass compared to a short fat glass. And you'll eat less pasta if it's served from a small dish rather than a large platter.

Wansink has noticed that mindless eaters fall into categories: those who eat too much at meals, graze all day, overeat at restaurants, or mindlessly eat at their desks or in their cars. If you relate to one or more these areas (and if you want to lose body fat), your goal should be to focus on that bad eating habit. You don't have to change your whole lifestyle. You just might need to cook less dinner so there are no leftovers, or take the candy jar off your desk.

Wansink recommends mindless eaters commit to 28 days of changing their fattening eating habit. Then, after 28 days, they can go on to improve another bad habit (such as drinking less soda, or munching on carrots instead of chips). On www.mindlesseating.org, Wansink offers a free chart to help monitor daily success. You might also want to read his book: *Mindless Eating: Why We Eat More Than We Think*. Perhaps it can help you fight fat with less effort than a harder workout.

Nancy Clark, MS, RD CSSD (Board Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics) counsels active people at her private practice located at Healthworks, the premier fitness center in Chestnut Hill MA (617-383-6100). Her popular *Sports Nutrition Guidebook*, *NEW Food Guide for Marathoners* and *Cyclist's Food Guide* offer additional information. They are available via www.nancyclarkrd.com. For online education, visit www.sportsnutritionworkshop.com.