WEIGHT CONTROL

Military Eyes Healthier School Food, Slimmer Recruits

Unhealthy foods served in school lunch lines could be undermining national security, according to a new report by senior retired military leaders who are pushing for smart investments in future generations. The report shows that three-fourths of young adults age 17 to 24 are unable to serve in the military, and excess weight is the most common medical reason. The report authors are calling on Congress to take immediate steps to improve foods and beverages served in schools to address our nation’s childhood obesity crisis, which threatens the future strength of our military.

What’s Contributing to Obesity? Meat, Cheese, Grease, Ice Cream

An increase in childhood obesity reflects increased intake of oils, meat, cheese, and frozen desserts, according to a new study by PCRM president Neal Barnard, M.D., in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. Dr. Barnard looked at food data maintained by the U.S. Department of Agriculture from 1909 to 2007. Meat intake rose from 123 pounds to more than 200 pounds per person per year with a greater than sixfold increase in chicken and turkey intake alone. In 2007, Americans also ate nine times more cheese and 16 times more frozen desserts than they did in 1909. Oil intake increased from 35 pounds to more than 86 pounds per person per year during the same interval. Since 1970 (no prior data available), sweetener consumption doubled, mostly from carbonated beverages. Other long-term trends include decreased grain consumption, decreased fluid milk consumption, and increased fruit (mostly juices) and vegetable intake.

BONE HEALTH

Animal Protein Bad for Bones

Animal protein is associated with decreased bone health, according to a recent study in the British Journal of Nutrition. In Beijing, 757 girls with an average age of 10 years were randomly assigned to a group consuming cow’s milk fortified with calcium, one consuming cow’s milk fortified with calcium and vitamin D, or a third group that served as controls and made no changes. Bone mass was measured at the beginning of the study and at 12, 24, 48, and 60 months. While calcium intake was positively associated with bone health, animal protein, especially from meat and eggs, was negatively associated with bone mineral density and content.

Erectile Dysfunction Linked to Heart Disease

Erectile dysfunction, or ED, is associated with increased risk of fatal heart attacks, according to a new study in the journal Circulation. Among 1,519 adult male research participants, those with ED had twice the risk of death from any cause, compared with those without ED. Men with ED were also 60 percent more likely to have a heart attack, stroke, or heart-related hospitalization or death. The new study confirms previous findings showing that both ED and heart disease are usually signs of atherosclerosis.

CORONARY HEALTH

Changes in Food Availability, 1909-2007
