

Your Patients Want More

Editorial Staff | DIGITAL EXCLUSIVE

Editor's Note: While your clinical focus is obviously acupuncture / TCM based, growing a loyal patient base can be as simple as informed conversations on the basic health issues patients think about daily, from diet to exercise to healthy aging and cancer prevention, and much more. Review and then share the following patient-friendly research summaries (the latest in an ongoing series) as an education tool that helps reinforce your value in patients' everyday health.

Help Them Gain Some Sleep ... and Lose Some Weight

Could the key to losing weight be as simple as increasing your nightly sleep? It's not nearly as far fetched as it seems. In fact, new research makes a strong connection. Even more encouraging, depending on your patient's current sleep habits, it might not take a major change to jump-start their weight-loss efforts ... and reap the health and wellness benefits of more sleep.

Researchers evaluated adults ages 21-40 with a body-mass index (BMI) that classified them as overweight (25.0-29.9) and average sleep duration of fewer than 6.5 hours per night. Study participants were randomly assigned to one of two groups for comparison: a sleep counseling group or a usual sleep group. Members of the first group received individualized sleep counseling designed to increase their nightly sleep to 8.5 hours; members of the second group served as controls and received no such instruction / counseling to extend their nightly sleep.

Findings suggest that among the 80 participants, sleep duration increased by approximately 1.2 hours per participant in the sleep group vs. the control group during the four-week study. This sleep difference corresponded to a significant decrease in daily energy intake and a negative energy balance (more energy expended than consumed; i.e., weight loss) in the sleep group.

Reference

- Tasali E, et al. Effect of sleep extension on objectively assessed energy intake among adults with overweight in real-life settings: a randomized clinical trial. *JAMA Intern Med*, Feb. 7, 2022 (online).
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Let Them Know the Secret to Building Muscle Lies in the Gut

Think probiotics are only good for your gut health? Think again. While probiotics (healthy bacteria; commonly found in yogurt, kombucha, etc., and available in supplement form) help restore and rebalance the GI microbiome - which an increasing body of research suggests is beneficial for far more than just the gut, their value may transcend the microbiome.

Simply put, probiotics strains "improve muscle mass and function," according to the study. These findings are particularly important for the aging population, as age-related skeletal muscle loss can lead to frailty and increase injury risk (e.g., fall risk).

So, how can probiotics help skeletal muscle health? According to the researchers, "Probiotics can promote the production of metabolites such as short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs), secondary bile acids (BAs), and some amino acids that can ultimately modulate muscle function."

Reference

- Giron M, et al. Gut microbes and muscle function: can probiotics make our muscles stronger? *J Cachexia, Sarcopenia & Muscle*, March 12, 2022 (online).
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Help Them Understand the Power of Flavonoids

Flavonoids are plant chemicals present in various amounts in almost all fruits and vegetables. While they contribute to the vivid colors we see in many fruits and veggies, they play a much more important role regarding health, including boosting the immune system.

Now let's talk about Parkinson's disease (you'll see why in a moment). PD is a progressive neurodegenerative brain disorder that causes shaking, tremors, and eventually problems with balance, coordination, and even walking and talking. In other words, Parkinson's is bad news. The good news: those plant chemicals in fruits and vegetables - flavonoids - may prolong life in people diagnosed with PD.

Research findings suggest Parkinson's patients who consume more flavonoids have a greater chance of living longer than those who consume less - in this case, during the 34-year study period. In addition, men (but not women) who consumed more flavonoids before their PD diagnosis also had a lower risk of dying during the study period compared to men who consumed less flavonoids.

Patients in the highest daily intake group (approximately 673 milligrams of flavonoids) had a 79 percent greater chance of survival during the 34-year tracking period compared to patients in the lowest daily intake group (approx. 134 milligrams of flavonoids).

Reference

- Zhang X, et al. Intake of flavonoids and flavonoid-rich foods, and mortality risk among individuals with Parkinson disease: a prospective cohort study. *Neurology*, 2022; 10.121.
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Make Sure Social Media Isn't Negatively Affecting Their Diet

What foods and drinks do highly followed celebrities tout on social media? More often than not, it's not the healthy kind. In a study of more than 5,000 foods and beverages included in social media posts from 181 "highly followed" celebrities, a whopping 87 percent of accounts had posts that included foods / beverages on the less healthy side: alcoholic beverages, snacks, sweets, etc.

The nutritional quality of foods and beverages featured in the Instagram posts was assessed using the Nutrient Profile Index, which allocates a score from 0-100 based on sugar, sodium, energy, saturated fat, fiber, protein and fruit and/or vegetable content per 100-gram sample. A "less healthy" designation meant the food in question achieved a score below 64; for beverages, it meant achieving a score below 70.

Of the 181 celebrities whose Instagram posts were analyzed, 66 were actors, actresses, and television personalities, 64 music artists and 51 athletes. Overall, 158 celebrity accounts (87.2 percent) earned a "less healthy" total food nutrition score, while 162 (89.5 percent) earned a "less

healthy" total beverage nutrition score. Interestingly, only a small percentage of posts featuring foods / beverages were sponsored by a company (4.8 percent).

The moral to the story: Don't let your patients' nutrition habits be shaped by social media - unless it's healthy habits, of course. That's where you can use social media to your - and their - advantage by posting information on proper nutrition for health and wellness.

Reference

- Turnwald BP, et al. Nutritional analysis of foods and beverages posted in social media accounts of highly followed celebrities. *JAMA Netw Open*, 2022;5(1):e2143087.

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