

Breakfast really is an important meal

Medical experts tell us the toll of the pandemic cannot be undone but we need to work toward a more healthy, just and equitable nation. Let's unite so all can eat healthy, be physically active and achieve and maintain a healthy weight. In the meantime, also wear your face covering and physically distance.

Q My kids and I are not morning people. We'd rather skip breakfast. My mom nags us. Is it really bad to skip breakfast? GL, Winterville

A For the 45 plus years I have taught nutrition, there have been small studies demonstrating kids who ate breakfast did better in school. Of course, there are always exceptions. Of few of the patients I counseled told me they felt really bad if they ate early in the morning. We planned for them to make sure they got all the nutrients (and not too many calories) they needed in a late morning snack and other meals. Recently, researchers published a study of the relationship of skipping breakfast to obesity. Sanjana Prabhu, a Brody fourth-year medical student, shares what the experts found.

People always say, "breakfast is the most important meal of the day." Breakfast or the first meal of the day is typically eaten between 5-9 a.m., or within two hours of waking. How true is that, really? Many people believe that skipping breakfast helps with weight control, but the researchers found that people who skip breakfast have a 1.5-times increased risk of being overweight or obese. They also found that skipping breakfast has a 1.3-times increased risk of abdominal obesity — the fat that is deposited in the trunk of your body, in the stomach area and around your vital organs. Doctors know that people with more fat in these areas are more likely to develop heart disease, diabetes, fatty liver and stroke.

OK, so skipping breakfast may increase a person's risk of becoming overweight, but why? First, it affects your appetite. When you first wake up, your body is in a fasting state from not eating for many hours. During this time, levels of the hormone ghrelin are increasing.

Ghrelin makes you hungry. The longer you wait to eat in the morning the more ghrelin you make. You get hungrier, and it'll take more food for you to feel satiated or full. In short, skipping breakfast can mess with your appetite and can make you overeat or binge-eat later in the day.

And, ghrelin actually promotes fat storage and decreases thermogenesis — a form of metabolism that "burns" calories. Eating breakfast helps regulate your appetite, and it also improves your blood sugar response and insulin sensitivity. Impaired insulin sensitivity is associated with type 2 diabetes.

What does impaired insulin sensitivity mean? When you eat, your body breaks down the food into the fuel that it needs and can use, which



KATHY KOLASA

includes glucose. Insulin is a hormone your pancreas makes that helps your body take glucose from your blood into the cells where your body can use it as fuel. When you have impaired insulin sensitivity, the cells resist insulin and your body no longer uses insulin efficiently to take glucose into the cell.

At first the pancreas can make extra insulin to get past the resistant cells. With time, the pancreas wears out and cannot make as much insulin. Without insulin, the glucose stays in the bloodstream. As a result, your body cells do not get the energy they need and the fuel stays in your bloodstream. This excessive level of sugar in your blood is known as hyperglycemia or diabetes, and it can cause damage over time.

The body uses a lot of energy for growth and repair throughout sleep. You should eat a well-balanced breakfast to replenish that energy, especially protein and calcium. Include four things: protein, whole grains, healthy fat and a fruit or vegetable. I like scrambled eggs with veggies, plus toast and some avocado on the side. Eggs provide protein, the toast should be whole grain, veggies are mixed in with the eggs, and avocado provides healthy fat. The protein and healthy fat especially help keep you full and cut down on unnecessary snacking.

Children especially should not skip breakfast. Not only does skipping breakfast affect their diet, it can greatly affect their school performance. One study from Mass General Hospital found that students who participated in the school breakfast program had better math grades, decreases in psychosocial issues and fewer absences and tardies. Eating breakfast can help kids focus, because their brains are receiving the fuel, or glucose, that they need. This goes for both kids and adults.

Eating breakfast is an important part of creating a daily schedule. It can be a great cue to remember to take your morning medications. Breakfast is also a great opportunity to get important vitamins and minerals, including calcium from milk, and iron and vitamins from fortified cereals. People, especially children, who skip breakfast tend not to make up for these vitamins and minerals in other meals.

If you are OK with eating in the morning, I would suggest trying to incorporate breakfast into your routine. See if you and your kids have improved focus at school and work. You might snack less, and everyone starts to feel a little healthier. If it turns out that breakfast is just not for you and your family, be sure to consult a nutritionist to make sure that the family diet is getting all the right nutrients and an appropriate amount of calories.

HIGHLIGHTING YOUR HEALTH

Virtual diabetes prevention program starts Aug. 23

Outreach helps participants stay healthy, lose weight.

Vidant Health News

One of the most effective ways to stay healthy is to be proactive about your own health and stay engaged with a lifestyle that helps prevent illness. In the words of the old saying, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. For type-2 diabetes, monitoring your well-being with preventative measures can slow or stop it from occurring.

Vidant Health's Diabetes Prevention Program is now virtual, making it easier than ever for the Vidant team members and the community to take action to stop diabetes. Due to COVID-19, the program will be offered online throughout the year with weekly and bi-weekly group classes available to anyone in eastern North Carolina.

The program includes group support and information about healthier eating, physical activity, stress reduction and coping skills, all of which are important in diabetes prevention, according to Vidant Lifestyle Nurse Specialist Susan Houston. She said the goal of the program is to work toward 5-7 percent weight loss and increase physical activity to a minimum of 150 minutes per week.

"Diabetes can be a sneaky and quiet chronic condition," Houston said. "It does not care if there is a pandemic going on, meaning it is important to take action quickly. If we all treated food and exercise like medications we should take every day, we might be able to prevent or manage chronic conditions like diabetes. And, we would need less trips to the pharmacy."

Houston said the program is designed to promote small incremental lifestyle changes throughout the year that could last a lifetime. Mind, body, and spirit are key elements in approaching a lifestyle change that could potentially prevent or delay type-2 diabetes.



Houston notes a holistic approach to lifestyle management can delay or stop the onset of type-2 diabetes. Physical activity and healthy eating are important components, but other factors like stress can contribute greatly.

"Stress management and emotional well-being are factors that can impact our body's resilience, weight and blood sugar levels," Houston said.

Healthy lifestyle choices and changes can be challenging, Houston said. However, with a lifestyle coach, group support, focused on short-term goals to empower long-term success, it is doable.

The Vidant Diabetes Prevention Program is for people with prediabetes. The components of this program would benefit those living with type-2 diabetes. A family member or friend with type-2 diabetes could join you on your diabetes prevention journey.

She said having a support system can help keep a person on track as they navigate alternative approaches of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Vidant's Diabetes Prevention Program starts Aug. 27 or Sept. 10. Pre-registration and a yearlong commitment are required to reserve your virtual seat. For more information about the program, please visit tiny.cc/vidantdpp or call 252-847-5590.

Highlighting Your Health is an educational segment courtesy of Vidant Health News. Vidant is a mission-driven, 1,708-bed health system that annually serves a region of more than 1.4 million people in 29 eastern North Carolina counties.

SPONSORED CONTENT

Yaba Mediterranean Grill makes healthy taste so good

BY CHRISTINA RUOTOLO
Hot Dish

I don't know about you, but the last three months have challenged my eating habits. I may or may not have gained a few unwanted pounds and made some unhealthy food choices. But there is hope. As we get ready for a new normal and a new school year, we need to go back to our food roots, exercise more and make better food choices. We need healthy ingredients that in turn provide us with vital nutrients, vitamins and minerals to keep our bodies healthy and in balance.

Many of us have heard of the Blue Zones, locations in the world where people live the longest because of their food and lifestyle choices. One of these regions is the Mediterranean, with its vast array of fresh and healthy food which can lower the risk for heart disease, help reduce inflammation, lower blood pressure and aid in digestion among other things. The mild climate yields an agricultural bounty that heavily influences the vegetable-dominant cuisines of this region. Main ingredients include olive oil, olives, eggplant, artichokes, squash, tomatoes, legumes, onions, mushrooms, cucumbers, and a variety of greens and lettuces.

Did you know we have a little slice of a blue zone right here in Greenville? We all know and love Bateeni, which has been in Greenville for a while now offering a wide variety of healthy Arabic and Mediterranean food. Just last month, the owners, Asif Daher and



CHRISTINA RUOTOLO/HOT DISH

Chicken shawarma sandwich.

cousin Nader Aladeen, opened a new location that is only steps away from the East Carolina University campus. It's called Yaba Mediterranean Grill at 1201 S. Charles Blvd. beside Domino's Pizza.

"Yaba" means dad in Arabic, and this little blue slice of the Mediterranean pays homage to Daher's heritage in Palestine and Jerusalem, and their small but flavor packed menu offers authentic tastes of their home country from shawarma, falafel, hummus and other sandwiches, salads and appetizers. They also import all of their spices from Jerusalem, and everything is so fresh that they literally have a "chopper," a person whose job is to chop fresh sides items and make dips and sauces all day long.

If you haven't tried Arabic food, you are missing out on not only amazing healthy flavor, but unique additions to your diet that provide you with year-long health benefits

that can improve vitality and help you live a longer life. Nothing is processed, everything is made from scratch, there is no added sugar and limited salt in their cooking, and they offer almost all gluten-free items.

So, let's get started and eat a true original, the authentic shawarma sandwich made with seasoned chicken that has been stacked on a vertical spit and slow roasted on all sides right in front of your eyes. The restaurant features a vertical shawarma cooker. They layer seasoned white-meat chicken with dark meat ensuring the juiciest meat as it twirls around the heated cooker and the edges turn a golden brown. The juices run down the vertical spit as they knife through thin slices of the layered meat.

The sliced nuggets are placed in a pillowy soft pita or bowl along with added fresh and vibrant toppings and sauces of your choice. The garnishment bar is a rainbow of vegetables and scratch-made sauces



and dips that take you to the Mediterranean.

You can choose as many as you want to add in from sliced tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce, regular red onions, pickled red onions with sumac, pickled beets, turnip pickles and authentic regular pickles from Jerusalem, Kalamata olives, jalapenos, green peppers, grape leaves, feta cheese, banana peppers, garlic spread, tzatziki, Jerusalem salad, tahini and tabbouleh. Add your favorite tastes and flavors to brighten and bring your sandwich or bowl to life. They also offer a beef shawarma that's just as succulent.

If you are wondering about some of the authentic dips and add-ons, let me enlighten you on some of my favorites. Tabbouleh salad is amazing. It's a vegetarian salad made of finely chopped parsley, tomatoes, mint, onion, bulgur, and seasoned with olive oil, lemon juice, salt and sweet pepper. The flavor is so fresh it literally bursts sunshine on your tongue when you eat it. It freshens your breath and cleanses your insides and it's packed with fiber and antioxidants.

Next is ground sumac onions. The onions are mixed with sumac which is a spice popular in Middle

Eastern and Mediterranean cooking and is made by grinding down the red berries of the sumac flower. It has mild acidic notes and a lite spicy flavor. Sumac has some antimicrobial, antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties and can lower your blood pressure. They also creamy homemade hummus dip made from pureed chick peas, vegetarian stuffed grape leaves filled with seasoned rice and cooked, or maybe you want their cool and refreshing tzatziki cucumber dip. These are just a few of my favorite authentic add-ons.

And don't forget to pick up one of their authentic desserts. One of my all-time favorites is the baklava, which is a sweet dessert pastry made with layers of filo sheets filled with pistachios and walnuts and is drizzled with a cooked "Atir" syrup made with orange blossom and rose water, as well as sugar and water. It's usually cut into triangles or diamond shapes and is a classic dessert that originated out of the Ottoman Empire in the late 1400s. The taste is rich and layered with warm honeyed sweet notes.

No matter what dish you try from sandwiches to authentic shawarma to falafel, you are bound to take a flavor journey that is steeped in rich culture with abundant flavor in every bite. Take back your health and go get you healthy back. Yaba Mediterranean Grill is open 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday-Sunday. For more information, call 252-698-1227 or check them out on Facebook.



YABA MEDITERRANEAN GRILL - NOW OPEN!

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