



Eating Lessons from the Past

March is National Nutrition Month. If you would like to improve your families or your own nutrition, help is available!

Contact the clinic for appointments with a health educator or dietician. If you live near an area office, check with your community health advocate or community health nurse for assistance. You will learn how to assess your current habits and nutritional patterns, and look for ways to make changes that will work for you.

Good nutrition can prevent many diseases that Native Americans are at risk for, such as diabetes, cancer, and heart disease. In addition, good nutritional habits will make you feel better **now**.

What can we learn about nutrition from the way our ancestors ate? Anthropologists and physicians have studied the diet of our 40,000-year-old Paleolithic ancestors as well as that of modern hunter-gatherer societies whose eating habits are similar to those of prehistoric people.

Early Nutrition

Our ancestors had to cope with wild animals and infectious diseases. But heart disease, stroke, osteoporosis, diabetes, high blood pressure, and breast cancer were almost unknown to them. They ate a wide variety of wild plants that were high in fiber and minerals, such as calcium. The wild game that was their meat was extremely low in fat, 4 percent compared to the 25 to 30 percent fat of modern domestic meat. They ate little salt, almost no sugar, and no dairy products or domestic grains. Yet, they were taller and stronger than their modern descendants.

Traditional Diets

Researchers who looked at the diets of present-day traditional cultures also found clues to good nutrition. Mediterranean people, who live longer and have lower rates of heart disease and cancer than other people, eat large amounts of vegetables, fruits, legumes, and grains. They consume low to moderate amounts of dairy products, fish and poultry, and almost no red meat. They cook with olive oil rather than animal fats.

In rural China, heart disease and cancer of the breast and colon are rare, while obesity is almost unheard of, even though the Chinese consume 30 percent more calories than Americans do. Their diet consists almost entirely of grains - such as rice, wheat, and millet - and a wide variety of vegetables. Most of their protein comes from soybeans and grains. Only about 15 percent of their calories come from fat.

Lessons from the Past

What do we learn from studying ancient and traditional eating habits? For one thing, when it comes to food, poverty may be a blessing. Traditional cultures simply cannot afford the highly processed foods and highly fattened meats that are harming our health. The whole, unprocessed foods that traditional people must make do with have less salt and fat, no additives or preservatives, and are rich in nutrients.

More Plants, Less Meat

Traditional societies all eat a wide variety of nutritious plant foods. Although their diet is low in dairy products and often low in protein, they don't seem to suffer from osteoporosis or other calcium-deficiency diseases. And because meat and animal fat are scarce, heart disease and cancer are rare. Many Americans are learning to focus their meals on pastas, grains, and fresh vegetables, and to use meat as a garnish or seasoning, if at all. By cutting back on butter, dairy products and animal fat, we may yet equal the superb nutritional status of our "primitive" ancestors.



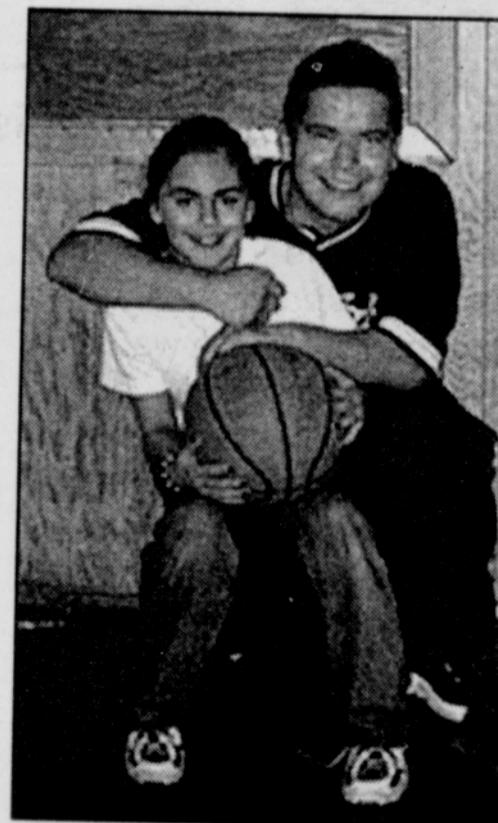
Angela Robertson

Robertson Assists in Lab

Angela Robertson started working at the Siletz Clinic approximately nine months ago. She started as a medical assistant and is now working in the lab as our lab assistant. She is a licensed phlebotomist.

Robertson also has been active with the Siletz Volunteer Fire Department for the last three years. She graduated from Newport High School in 1992 and now attends Oregon Coast Community College to become an emergency medical technician.

She is married to tribal member Dale Robertson and they have two children, Braxton, 6, and Britany, 3. When not working or studying, she enjoys riding her 4-wheeler with family and visiting her grandparents in Portland.



Alyssa Scott, open gym prize winner, with cousin Tony Scott, who spent his 23rd birthday at open gym.