

# HEALTH

## Diets Bring Lapses In Memory

Dieting makes people forgetful and vague - and don't work anyway, according to British researchers. But they said it was the stress of dieting, rather than the lower food intake that affected people.

Mike Green of the Institute of Food Research ran tests on 70 volunteers, assessing mental performance in areas such as memory, speed of reaction and processing capacity.

"The deficits we saw were invariably in subjects who said they were on diets," Green told New Scientist magazine.

He said the shortfall in performance was roughly the same as in people after two drinks.

"The effects are similar to anxiety," he said. "Constantly thinking

about food and worrying about diet means that dieters don't have enough mental processing capacity to deal with tasks properly."

In a second round of tests, he put people on diets or took slimmers off their diets and then tested them. Again, the dieters did worse. "The effects were largest in dieters who reported not losing weight," he said.

The Institute said in a statement that several studies also showed that food deprivation did not affect mental performance — but that people spent so much time thinking about their diets that it distracted them from their work.

Green a psychologist, said dieting was not a sensible way to lose weight, anyway. "It really screws up people's metabolism," he said.



Lorraine Hood-Jack (from left), Sonya Stallings-Clark and Sandra Brame promote HIV/AIDS educational awareness through the American National Red Cross and the African American Women and Youth Committed to Making the Communication Net Work. The Portland residents are members of the Zeta Sigma Omega chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Society. (Photo by Duane Lewis)

## Medical Research Supports Tobacco Advertising Ban

Tobacco advertising is a central factor in encouraging teenagers to start smoking, perhaps twice as strong an influence as peer pressure, researchers said Tuesday.

The researchers say their finding contradicts the tobacco industry's assertion that advertising and marketing are aimed at gaining brand loyalty and market share among kids who already smoke, not at encouraging non-smoking teens to start.

"Marketing is actually stronger than peer pressure in having children take the first step toward becoming an addicted smoker," John Pierce, a cancer prevention expert at the University of California at San Diego, told reporters.

Pierce released the research, published in the Oct. 18 edition of the Journal of the National Cancer Institute, at a news conference that coincided with a campaign by anti-smoking and medical groups to support federal efforts to curb youth smoking and restrict advertising and marketing aimed at kids.

Research suggests most smokers begin as teens and about 3,000 kids start smoking each day.

Thomas Lauria, a spokesman from the Tobacco Institute trade group, attacked Pierce's research, which included complicated mathematical formulas for "susceptibility" indexes.

"These erroneous conclusions fly in the face of overwhelming international evidence to the contrary," Lauria said in a telephone interview. "The primary reason (youths start smoking) is peer pressure.

"It is appalling that anti-smoking

groups would do anything to downplay the pre-eminent reason why young people start smoking. It's almost as if they don't want to solve the problem," he said.

The industry is fighting additional federal regulation in court and urges voluntary efforts by the tobacco industry to discourage young smokers.

Pierce, a former anti-tobacco official under then-Surgeon General Everett Koop, also released a second study, to be published in Health Psychology next month, tracking a century of cigarette marketing.

Pierce and his colleagues found, for instance, that a campaign featuring what in the 1890s were risque pictures of bare-bellied women tucked in cigarette packs led to a notable rise in young male smokers. A 1920s campaign linking smoking and thinness corresponded with a surge in women smokers.

The Cancer journal study looked at the influence marketing had on teenagers, and compared it to other influences, such as academic performance, or exposure to good friends or relatives who smoke. It found that advertising enhanced that susceptibility considerably, Pierce said.

He and his colleagues drew on prior research to determine which youths were "susceptible" to starting smoking, and calculated additional risk from exposure to the marketing.

The survey found that teens thought cigarette ads give out at least one positive message, such as that smoking helps people feel comfortable in social situations or makes it easier to stay thin.

## Yuppie Flu Laid To Blood Pressure Problem

Chronic fatigue syndrome, a mysterious illness that renders many of its young adult victims tired and even bedridden, may be linked to a blood pressure abnormality associated with lightheadedness, said a recently published study.

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine found 16 of the 21 patients suffering from chronic fatigue syndrome responded positively to the drug and salt therapy used to treat neurally mediated hypotension, the blood pressure problem.

Nine of the total of 23 patients included in the study reported their symptoms subsided completely.

Many of the patients said they

had been avoiding salt in an effort to improve their diets, which the researchers said may have contributed to the blood pressure problem.

Up to 1 million Americans suffer from chronic fatigue syndrome, which is sometimes referred to as "yuppie flu." It often strikes its mostly young white adult victims after a bout with a virus and leaves them with low stamina, lightheadedness, and difficulty concentrating. No therapy has been found effective for the syndrome, which can plague victims for years.

"The findings of this study document a close link between neurally mediated hypotension and the chronic fatigue syndrome," study authors

Issam Bou-Holaigah, Peter Row, Jean Kan, and Hugh Calkins wrote in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

However, the researchers urged caution because of the small number of patients involved in the study.

"Nonetheless, nearly half of treated patients reported complete or nearly complete resolution of symptoms within one month of starting treatment... The magnitude of improvement is difficult to explain as a placebo effect," they wrote.

Besides increasing salt intake, patients were given either fludrocortisone or an array of other drugs used to treat hypotension.

## Study Supports Breastfeeding

Children who have been breastfed are less likely to develop allergies such as asthma and the protective effect lasts

until they are teenagers, Finnish researchers reported last week.

Dr. Ulla Saارينen and colleagues at the University of Helsinki said they found children benefitted from breastfeeding up to the age of 17.

The doctors, who started their research in 1975, followed the same group of children from birth through to 17. Volunteer families were watched and the babies' diet was monitored carefully.

In a report in the Lancet medical journal, Saارينen said 20 percent of the children showed some sort of allergy at the age of one. By 17 that

figure had risen to 47 percent.

Those babies fed no other milk but breast milk up to the age of six months were much less likely to develop allergies. Eczema, asthma or food allergies developed in 65 percent of 17-year-olds who had received little or no breastfeeding compared with 40 percent of those who had more than one month.

"Breastfeeding for longer than one month without other milk supplements offers significant prophylaxis (protection) against food allergy at three years of age, and also against respiratory allergy at 17 years of age," the doctors wrote.

"Six months of breastfeeding is required to prevent eczema during the first three years, and possibly also to

prevent substantial atopy (allergy) in adolescence."

The researchers, who will continue their study, said human milk may help mature the lining of a child's intestine and the immune system. It is believed that allergens somehow stimulate the immune system too early, causing allergies later in life.

Dozens of studies point to the benefits of breastfeeding, showing it protects children from disease, affects intelligence and behavior and can protect premature babies from brain damage.

It also prevents ovarian and premenopausal breast cancer, prevents gut, chest, ear and urinary tract infections in young children, and helps manage diarrhoea.

## Forgetting About The Snacks

Danish doctors recently reported that they had confirmed what many people had suspected for many years - if we're overweight we tend to lie about what they eat.

Dr. Berit Heitmann and colleagues at Copenhagen Health Services interviewed nearly 400 men and women about what they ate and then compared it to their real diet.

They found that lean people tended to report their food intake accurately, but those classified as obese forgot about the little fat-and-sugar-laden snacks that add so many calories.

In a report in the British Medical Journal they said their findings had implications for researchers studying the links between diet and health.

High-fat diets have been found to increase the risk of cancer, and heart disease.

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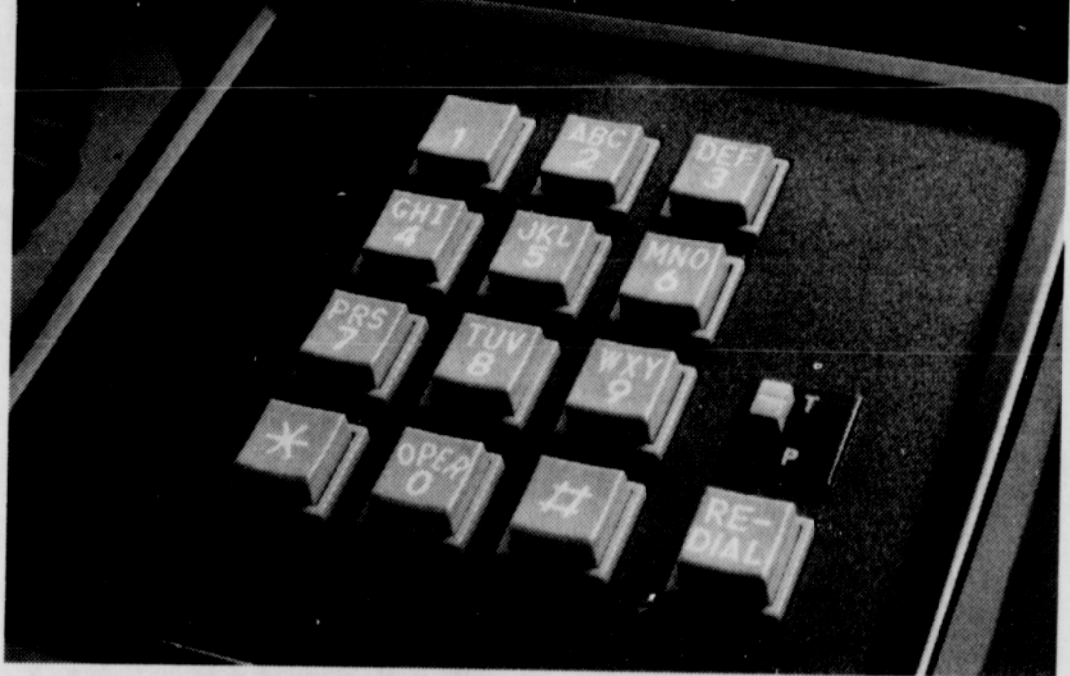
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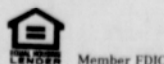


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