The psychological disconnect between knowing how to live healthy and actually pursuing a healthy lifestyle.

A survey of Rutgers University students showing that obesity prevalence is not due to lack of knowledge but a lack of action.

Tag Words: Exercise and Health, Exercise Performance, Sports Nutrition, Nutrition and Health, Healthy lifestyle, Disease prevention, Physical Fitness, Nutrition and Exercise

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Summary

We plan to issue a survey to the Rutgers student population based individual nutrition, exercise and health habits. This survey will seek to find the patterns in health of the lifestyles of Rutgers students. One of the reasons we are doing this survey is to find out why there seems to be a psychological disconnect for people in exercising and eating healthy. We have all the information about exercising and eating healthy in front of us, but most people choose not to anyway. We believe this information will help to raise awareness about healthy lifestyles to the students and people around us. We plan to take the information we find and submit it to newspapers/journals (not yet determined).

Video Link

Health, Nutrition, and Exercise: The Psychological Disconnect: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c0bUE5lp0Js
The Issue: Lack of Healthy Lifestyle

Nutrition (GB)

Maintaining a healthy diet is something that really is not that important to most people. The obesity epidemic is one prime example of that. One of the main problems is that people don’t know what they are eating or why the foods that they are eating are bad for them. Sometimes people are aware of the unhealthy decisions they make, but still choose to engage in them anyway. It is important to educate people on nutrition so that they can learn to help improve their health and their lifestyles. An understanding of foods and their content can help people make wiser decisions when choosing foods for an upcoming meal. If people understand more about healthy eating, they will probably think twice about their food choices.

All food is measured in energy content based on the number of kilocalories. The more kilocalories a person burns versus how many kilocalories they ingest can determine fluctuations in body weight. The body uses kilocalories to operate and carry out its daily functions, but it is recommended to incorporate physical activity as well to control and maintain body weight. Our body breaks down the energy from the macronutrient molecules that we ingest. These macronutrients are carbohydrates, lipids and proteins. Carbohydrates and proteins contain 4 kilocalories per gram, whereas lipids contain 9 kilocalories per gram.

Carbohydrates are a diverse group of compounds produced primarily by plants. They serve as a vital source of energy in our body. Carbohydrate-rich foods are whole grains, legumes, fruits and vegetables. It is important to control the amount of carbohydrates you consume as well as pay attention to the quality of the sources of carbohydrates. “Carbohydrates should account for 45-65% of total energy intake. The Recommended Dietary Allowance is 130 grams per day for adults” (McGuire 151). People who are physically active and work out regularly are often advised to consume more carbohydrate to prevent fatigue and replenish glycogen stores. “The Dietary Guidelines recommend that adults consume 14 grams of dietary fiber per 1000 kilocalories” (McGuire 152). High fiber diets are often associated with reduced risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and obesity. It is also highly recommended that you reduce the amount of added sugars in your diet as low as possible. Foods that contain these large amounts of added sugars are soft drinks, cakes, cookies and candy. These foods contain lots of added sugar with low nutritional value. Added sugar is one of the leading causes of obesity in America. Americans on average consume over 300 kilocalories of added sugars per day.

Proteins constitute the most abundant organic substance in the body, making up at least 50% of our dry weight. Protein is found in a variety of foods, but meat, fish, eggs, dairy products, and legumes such as dried beans, lentils, soybeans and peanuts provide especially good sources of
Proteins are made from the 20 different kinds of amino acids. In order for the body to be able to make proteins required for functioning, it needs all 20 amino acids. However, the body only naturally makes about half. The amino acids that the body makes on its own are known as nonessential amino acids, whereas the amino acids we need to get from our diet are known as essential amino acids. Foods of animal origin tend to have larger amounts of certain essential amino acids than do plant-derived foods. In addition, foods of animal origin tend to have a higher bioavailability of protein, which makes them quality source of protein. When choosing protein sources to eat, it is important to pay attention to the amounts of essential amino acids. “If a protein source contains adequate amounts of all essential amino acids, it is said to be a complete protein source. Protein should account for 10-35% of total energy intake” (McGuire 197). The U.S Department of Agriculture encourages intake of fat-free or low-fat milk, lean meats, and legumes. These foods are nutrient-dense and high in protein. For adults, it is recommended that they consume 0.8g of protein per kilogram of body weight per day.

Fats, or lipids, are the third kind of macronutrient. Lipids that are liquid at room temperature are called oils and lipids that are solid at room temperature are called fats. The two essential fatty acids are linoleic acid and linolenic acid. Linoleic acid is found in high amounts in nuts (such as walnuts), seeds and certain oils such as those made from soybeans, safflower, or corn. Linolenic acid is abundant in some oils such as those made from canola or flaxseed. Fatty fish and seafood are good sources of these longer chain omega-3 fatty acids. Adequate Intake Levels for linoleic acid are 17 grams daily for adult males and 12 grams daily for adult females. “For linolenic acid, the Adequate Intake is 1.6 grams daily for adult males and 1.1 grams daily for adult females. Lipids should constitute 20-35% of our total kilocalories. The Adequate Intake for adults is about 30 grams per day” (McGuire 253). Without adequate essential fatty acids, our skin can become irritated and flaky and can also lead to gastrointestinal and immune system problems. Fat intake is seen as an important factor in the obesity epidemic based on its 9 kilocalories per gram as opposed to just 4 from protein and carbohydrates. High intake of saturated fatty acids, trans fatty acids and cholesterol can increase risk factors for disease. On the other hand, monounsaturated fatty acids have the opposite effect and can actually reduce risk. Good sources of monounsaturated fats and polyunsaturated fats are fish, nuts, and vegetable oils. Our consumption of fats and oils should be limited to 3 to 11 teaspoons each day.

The Food Guide Pyramid was created by the United States Department of Agriculture to improve the nutrition and well-being of all Americans. Based on this pyramid, there are five main food groups that should make up a person’s diet. These five groups are grains, vegetables, fruits, dairy and protein.

Grains are any food made from rice, oats, cornmeal and barley. They are a major source of B vitamins, iron, magnesium, selenium, energy and dietary fiber. Whole grains and refined grains are the two classifications of grains. “Whole grains contain the entire grain kernel, whereas
refined grains are put through a process that removes the bran and germ” (MyPyramid). Any white sources of grains such as white bread would be classified as refined and whole wheat bread would be classified as whole grain. The best way to incorporate grains into your diet would be to substitute out the refined grains for healthier whole grains. Some whole grains snacks can also provide a good source of grains. It is recommended to eat 3-10 ounces of grains per day.

The next food group is vegetables. Vegetables are broken down into five subgroups based on their nutrient content. They are rich sources of potassium, vitamins A, E, and C, folate and dietary fiber. There are dark green vegetables, orange vegetables, dry beans and peas, starchy vegetables and a group classified as ‘other.’ Vegetables should be eaten as fresh as possible to get the highest nutrient content. It is important to note that cooking or soaking vegetables in water can deprive them of their nutrient content because most of the nutrients in vegetables are water soluble. The best way to eat vegetables is to eat them raw, but microwaving and steaming are also good ways to prepare them. “It is recommended to eat 1-4 cups of vegetables per day” (MyPyramid). Vegetables have a lot of the same benefits as fruits. Diets that are rich in fruits and vegetables are likely to reduce the risk of chronic diseases, type 2 diabetes, cancer, coronary heart disease, developing kidney stones, and bone loss. Fruits and vegetables are low in kilocalories and high in nutrients, which make them an important part of a healthy weight-loss diet.

Dairy consists of milk, cheese, yogurt and milk-based desserts. It is important to consume low fat dairy products because any dairy product that is not low-fat contains empty calories. This applies to any dairy product with added sugar as well. Empty calories are those calories which basically provide nothing but energy to your body and are low in nutrients. As previously mentioned, the added sugars that Americans consume are considered empty calories, which lead to weight gain. Eliminating the empty calories from our diets can make a huge impact on weight loss. The milk products that are high in fats are typically high in saturated fats and cholesterol. High levels of bad cholesterol can lead to other health diseases. Diets rich in milk products may reduce the risk of low bone mass throughout life. Dairy sources also contain vital nutrients such as calcium, potassium, Vitamin D and protein.

“Proteins function as building blocks for bones, muscles, cartilage, skin and blood” (MyPyramid). Quality sources of protein supply the body with the B vitamins, Vitamin E, magnesium, zinc and iron. It is important to choose lean beef when eating different kinds of beef. The leanest beef cuts are round steaks and roasts, top loin, top sirloin, chuck shoulder and arm roasts. Try to always choose ground beef that is 90% lean or greater. It is also important to keep a variety of protein sources in your diet. Fish is another good source of protein that is also rich in omega-3 fatty acids.
Another common issue among individuals today is the use of supplements versus eating natural foods. These supplements can be vitamins, protein supplements, energy supplements and many others. A lot of people resort to supplementation in their diets due to time constraints or just the convenience of a pill as opposed to eating whole foods. Supplements are great for people who may need them for reasons other than previously mentioned. For example, there are people who are deficient in certain vitamins. For people with a vitamin deficiency, it is likely that they need large doses of this particular vitamin beyond what they can ingest from food. On the other hand, for people who are perfectly healthy, eating natural foods as opposed to supplements is a much better way to get nutrients. They are much more efficiently used by the body and a higher percentage of those nutrients will be processed. With supplement usage, there is a good chance that a lot of nutrients get eliminated from the body due to solubility issues. The supplements are usually taken in large doses and the body does not always process fast enough to absorb all of it. When possible, it is always better to try to refrain from using diet supplements.

There has been a lot of debate on the topic of meal frequency. A lot of health and nutrition enthusiasts believe that eating more meals per day in smaller quantities will boost metabolism and calorie burning much better than eating less frequent larger portion meals. A lot of research has proved that meal frequency does not have any real effect on metabolism as long as caloric intake is the same. The best advice that nutrition and health professionals can give is to eat nutritious meals and do what it take for you to control your weight. Eating smaller and more frequent meals can help some people to control hunger and prevent binge eating, yet some people believe that once they start eating they become hungrier and need to eat more. Eating a healthy diet should not be something stressful. There are huge varieties of healthy options and exploring those options will make you realize that you can eat good foods and satisfy your appetite without overeating.

**Exercise Program (MG)**

Healthy, sensible eating along with daily exercise can greatly improve overall health. Adults should be getting 30-60 minutes of physical activity, while children should be getting more than 60 minutes of physical activity daily. However, to lose weight, 60 to 90 minutes of physical activity are recommended each day. The 30 minutes recommendation is for an average, healthy adult that is looking to maintain their health and reduce their susceptibility to diseases. Cardiovascular workouts such as running, brisk walking, or cycling should be done five days a week at a moderately intense pace for 30 minutes or at a vigorous intensity 3 days a week for 20 minutes. To assess your intensity during a moderately paced exercise, you want to be able to carry on a conversation while raising your heart rate and breaking a sweat. During vigorous intensity workout, you should not be able to carry on a conversation and should have a high heart rate to meet the demands of your working muscles. Short bouts of high intensity exercise, like sprinting or jumping rope, are great ways to work out. This is known as interval training. During
interval training, high intensity exercise is done for a short time period to increase heart rate then reduced to a moderate or slow level for a certain time period. The quick change from a high intensity exercise to low intensity will have a positive effect on your heart, metabolism, and musculoskeletal system (Haskell et al 5).

For strength training, do 8 to 10 strength-training exercises, with 8 to 12 repetitions of each exercise twice a week. Strength training activities include progressive weight training programs, weight bearing calisthenics, and resistance training. These weight bearing exercises help build strong bones while increasing your basal metabolic rate. Basal metabolic rate is your resting metabolic rate, the rate at which your body uses energy for respiration and various other survival activities. Another factor of your exercise plan should be stretching. This will help with your flexibility and decrease the intensity of soreness experienced the following day. Some examples of a work out taking all of the above into consideration is a 30 minute work out on the treadmill doing interval training, weight lifting for upper body, and core exercises. Always end the work out with a cool down and stretches to bring down your heart rate and increase flexibility. The following day the same work out can be done except weight lift using the lower body (McArdle 479).

Exercise is very taxing on the body making nutrition pre and post exercise very important. An optimal diet provides the body with the required nutrients in adequate amounts for tissue maintenance, repair, and growth. When the body is active on a daily basis, its metabolic demands will increase and the individual will become more hungry. Eating nutrient dense foods is the key to satisfying hunger and replenishing the fuel utilized by the body. There is not one food or diet that can give you all the nutrients, vitamins, and minerals needed for optimal health and exercise performance. It is the balance of various foods and fluids that will help the body recover and grow (American Dietetic Association 2009).

The recommended nutrient intake for proteins, lipids, and carbohydrates and the food sources for these macronutrients are 1200 kilocalories for a resting daily energy requirement. On average, the daily energy requirement for young adults is 2000 kilocalories for women and 3000 kilocalories for men. The recommended dietary allowance for protein intake is 0.83 grams/kilograms of body mass. For people who train intensely, like Olympic athletes or marathon runners, their protein intake should be increased to 1.2-1.8 grams/kilogram body mass. To stay healthy and active, lipid intake should not exceed 30% of the diet’s energy content. The carbohydrates consumed should be complex carbohydrates like spinach, whole grain bread, oatmeal, beans, etc. 55-60% of the caloric intake should be predominantly starches from fiber rich, unprocessed grains, fruits, and vegetables like the ones listed above. These carbohydrates are the primary source of energy for the body especially during high intensity exercise. The carbohydrate intake should be around 5-6 grams per kilogram. The reason carbohydrates are such a large part of the diet is because they are stored as glycogen within muscles and the liver.
While exercising, muscle glycogen, along with glucose, powers the contractile elements of the muscle. The body stores very little glycogen, so its quantity depends mostly on dietary changes throughout the day. Thus, sufficient carbohydrate intake maintains the body’s limited glycogen stores (McArdle 90). This allows for optimal macronutrient supply while working out.

Another tool used by sports nutritionists is the glycemic index. The glycemic index measures how fast a food is likely to raise your blood sugar. A food with a high glycemic index produces a large and rapid rise in blood glucose and insulin due to the large amounts of sugar in that food. Examples of food with a high glycemic index are ice cream, white rice, raisins, doughnuts, cake, etc. Foods like these will cause a spike in the blood sugar followed by a subsequent decline. This decline will make you feel sluggish and won’t help when you are trying to exercise. Foods with a low glycemic index are high in fiber and low in saturated fat like fruits and vegetables. These foods delay gastric emptying and maximize absorption of the various vitamins and minerals they contain. Foods like oatmeal, plums, barley, apples are great foods to eat before you work out. These foods provide lasting fuel for your body as your metabolic needs increase when you exercise (McArdle 92).

The goal for eating prior to exercising is having a sufficient amount of stored energy and satisfying yourself without leaving undigested food in your stomach. Three to four hours before you work out eat a carbohydrate based meal with protein that is low in fat and fiber. This will maximize muscle and liver glycogen stores along with providing glucose for intestinal absorption during exercise. Don’t eat anything that contains excessive amounts of sugar as this will cause a rapid rise along with subsequent decline in blood sugar which will impair your body’s central nervous system function. Thirty minutes to one hour before exercising, snack on an energy bar or small piece of fruit. Always enter exercise hydrated because you need enough time to eliminate excess fluid as well as balancing fluid levels throughout the body. An example of a meal to eat approximately four hours before exercising is a whole wheat sandwich with lettuce, tomatoes, sliced turkey, and cheese or peanut butter with bananas on a piece of whole wheat toast (Haskell et al 8).

Post exercise your body’s fuel utilized during the work out needs to be restored. Within thirty minutes of cessation of exercise, a snack should be eaten. If you aren’t hungry, opt for a fluid source of fuel like chocolate milk, sports drink, or smoothie. Some snack ideas are oatmeal made with milk and nuts, a mini bagel with peanut butter, trail mix and a sports drink, cheese stick and a whole piece of fruit. Within two hours post exercise, a meal should be eaten consisting of a ratio of carbohydrates to proteins of 4:1. Carbohydrates help replace muscle stores of glycogen while proteins help repair damaged muscle tissue and generate muscle growth. Throughout this time period, water or a sports drink should be consistently consumed to replace the fluids and electrolytes lost in sweat (American Dietetic Association 2009).
As stressful and energy demanding as exercise is for the body, it is the best activity that can be done for your health. It prevents many diseases and helps manage your weight as discussed in depth below.

**Issues related to living an unhealthy lifestyle (SN)**

There are a multitude of benefits that result from making the active choice to follow a healthy nutrition plan and receive an adequate amount of exercise each day. Not only will an individual’s current health conditions improve but by living a healthy lifestyle the person will lower their likelihood of developing future health concerns. Living this health lifestyle will also benefit an individual on a psychosocial level by improving self-esteem. Not only should all individual know and understand these consequences but they should also make use their knowledge and live active, health lives.

Being overweight greatly increases a person’s risk in developing many health problems. One of the main reasons is the fact that a person who is overweight is much more likely to have high blood pressure and high cholesterol which in turn causes most of these health concerns. A person with high blood pressure has a heart that is pumping blood harder than the average person. The arteries are also affected by this because they must carry this blood throughout the body. When blood pressure is high for a long period of time the heart and arteries sometimes develop problems and stop functioning properly because they are overworked. A person who is obese is up to six times more likely to have high blood pressure ("Health Risks of Morbid Obesity.", 2011). This could result from the lack of a healthy diet. High sodium levels increase blood pressure. Greasy foods, over the counter medication, and processed food all contain high levels of sodium. Being obese also increases an individual’s cholesterol. The body produces both “good” cholesterol (HDL) and “bad” (LDL) cholesterol. When the LDL cholesterol is at elevated levels it can really lead to some health concerns. LDL cholesterol circulates through the body in the blood and slowly sticks t the sides of arties and can eventually clog them. High cholesterol could be a result of a multitude of factors. One of the leading causes is not eating the right foods. When a person eats too much saturated fat in their daily diet the body makes more cholesterol. Making healthy choices like eating starch, fiber, vegetables, whole grains, and fruit. Regular exercise also lowers LDL cholesterol. High blood pressure and cholesterol are associated with disease such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and other disease correlated with obesity.

A person who is obese is much more likely to be diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes. This disease is when an individual has high levels of glucose in the blood. Individuals with Type 2 Diabetes have a problem with the way insulin is made and used in the body. This is a huge concern because insulin is an important hormone that is responsible for regulation of carbohydrate and fat metabolism. It is also responsible for moving glucose into cells to be store as glycogen so it could be later used for energy. When a person has Type 2 Diabetes sugar is not stored in the cells and an excess of glucose builds up in the blood. When a person is overweight they are more
likely to have this insulin resistance (Ali, Mokdad, et al., 2003). Fat cells are less sensitive to insulin than muscle cells; therefore, an obese person with more fat cells will have less effective insulin which will result in buildup of glucose in the blood. General complication involved with having Type 2 Diabetes are eye problems, strokes, nerve damage, kidney issues, high blood pressure and cholesterol, Glaucoma, foot ulcers, and peripheral vascular disease. Sometimes being diagnosis with Diabetes is inevitable. An individual can get Diabetes by inheriting it genetically or the disease can be a product of old age, but Diabetes caused from being overweight is completely preventable. Just by choosing a healthy lifestyle could significantly lower your chances of developing Type 2 Diabetes (Ali, Mokdad, et al., 2003).

It is common knowledge that people who neglect healthy choices and become overweight greatly increase their risk of developing heart diseases, especially coronary artery disease. Coronary artery disease occurs when the arteries that carry oxygenated blood to the heart become narrow and blocked by plaque. Plaque develops when there is a high amount of cholesterol in the blood. This excess cholesterol sticks to the wall of the arteries. Scar tissue then covers this excess cholesterol. This plaque build-up reduces the amount of blood and oxygen that enters the heart. Although there is a genetic component involved in having high cholesterol, most cases are caused directly by poor eating habits. Heart disease can easily be prevented by correcting bad eating habits and exercising daily. Just by simple exercising a person can lower their LDL cholesterol (“bad” cholesterol) and increase the HDL cholesterol (“good” cholesterol) (Ali, Mokdad, et al, 2003). Not only do overweight people have more LDL cholesterol but people with more body fat have higher blood levels of substances that cause inflammation. When blood vessels are inflamed there is a significantly higher risk for developing heart disease. If a person is overweight they can easily lower their risk. Even a minimal amount of weight loss will lower your risk for heart disease and other conditions involved with obesity. (“Over-Weight and Obesity”)

There have been recent Studies done that are now also linking obesity to cancer. Not all cancers share this link to obesity. The cancers that are known to be correlated with being overweight are cancers of the breasts, cervix, colon, kidney, liver, ovaries, stomach, gall bladder, esophagus, and certain types of skin cancers (Calle, 2004). As previously stated, when our bodies are overweight they are producing more hormones than the normal person, particularly hormones such as estrogen and insulin. Obviously these hormones are needed for the body to function properly; however, if the levels are too high and out of control then this could lead to cancer growth. The effect obesity has on the body and how it causes cancers varies with each type of cancer. For instance, obesity causes gastroesophageal reflux disease which in turn may lead to cancer of the esophagus. So one might question, how much of the cancer cases are caused by obesity rather than other genetic or exposure to other environmental influences? Studies by the American Cancer society suggest that over 90,000 cancer deaths are caused by obesity. The positive significance of this is that many cancer cases could easily be prevented without much
treatment if individuals take some responsibility in order to maintain a healthy life style (Calle, 2004). Cancer is a physical, financial, and emotional battle to fight; just by eating right and exercising weekly could significantly decrease the risk of developing this common disease.

With all the health issues that are directly associated with being overweight it isn’t really surprising that being overweight lowers an individual’s life expectancy. Obesity is actually the leading preventable causes of deaths worldwide. People who are extreme obese actually are expected to live as much as ten years less than a fit individual. Someone averagely obese actually subtracts two to four years off their life expectancy. Just by following a good nutrition plan and exercising an individual can live significantly longer and have a better quality of life.

Choosing to not follow a healthy nutrition plan or exercise daily can result in a person becoming overweight. People who are overweight suffer from many health problems, as previously discussed, but also from many psychosocial issues as well. Being obese is the last socially accepted form of discrimination in American society. These individuals suffer social stigmas in their own work environment, the education system, and even the health-care system. A person who is overweight is less likely to be hired or promoted in a company because they are usually rated to lack self-discipline, have low administrative potential, and be less ambitious. Statics show that an overweight individual is more likely to be fired, receive lower wages, and have lower promotion prospects then a fit individual (Vaidya,2006). This negative stigma can also been seen in the educational settings. Children who are overweight are victimized and excluded from social activities because of their weight, especially with adolescents. Even teachers rate heavier children as being untidy, lazy, emotional, and less likely to succeed. This ultimately lowers the self-esteem of the student which could negatively impact their actual performance in the classroom. A person who is obese also is discriminated against in our own health-care system. Health-care workers tend to see obese people as being non-complaint, dishonest, weak-willed, and uneducated. Physicians also spend less-time with the patients who are obese and they are less likely to obtain preventative health-care services. This results in obese people receiving a lower quality of care than a thin individual, which in fact an obese person is more likely to have health problem and may need better health care then a fit individual. Just by choosing to not follow a healthy nutrition plan or exercise daily can ultimately negatively affect how an individual is treated in social environments (Vaidya,2006).

Obesity negatively impacts an individual’s self-esteem. People who suffer from obesity by choose unhealthy living habits have an increased risk for emotional issues because of peer rejection, teasing, and prejudices. A specific study recently showed that this is especially true in Hispanic and white adolescent females. Obese adolescents are more likely to suffer from depression, loneliness, and nervous (Vaidya,2006). They are also much more likely to participate in high-risk behavior such as smoking. Self-esteem and having a positive self-image is an important aspect of our mental health. Self-esteem is measure of how well we are doing
socially and how we feel about ourselves. People who have a positive self-image are usually happy, healthy, productive, and successful. Individual’s that have a negative self-image are usually depressed, failures, and very pessimistic. Not living a healthy life style doesn’t just effect an individual physically but negative impacts them socially and emotionally (Vaidya, 2006).

Nutritious meals and adequate exercise are essential daily practices that are needed in order to live an extensive, healthy life. Maintaining a healthy diet should be a priority for all families. The obesity epidemic in America has increased dramatically over the years. With the spread of fast-food and video games, children aren’t eating right or getting their daily exercise. So how can this problem be fixed? Education and balance are needed in order for children and adults to live healthy lifestyle. Learning about the consequences of eating poorly and not exercising on a health and psychosocial level, would help individuals learn about the importance of healthy choices. Also once the knowledge is learned an individual must actually use the information in order to prevent obesity and diseases associated with obesity. There are too many people who understand the effects of obesity but chose to still live an unhealthy life. This strange “disconnect” between what individuals know and what individuals do is a major problem in many health aspects. It is also important to remember that it is never too late to improve your body and have the discipline to get healthy.

Conclusion
Eating healthy foods and exercising daily should not be should not just be a choice that some people make. Making healthy choices is a responsibility that an individual has to take-on in order to increase their standard of living. If everyone in America just simply took the time to make health choices the quality of life would improve dramatically and the obesity epidemic could be solved. There is a multitude of healthy food options, quick, and easy eating dieting plans that an individual can simple follow in order to eat the right food. Exercise does not have to be a big ordeal; just a quick thirty minute walk could greatly improve health. If these simple daily activities and choices could help individual live up to ten years longer why don’t people follow them? Americans have the knowledge of what needs to be done to get health, they just need to take the time out of their busy lives and use the information in order to solve the obesity issue.

References


Our service project is to raise awareness about the effects of obesity and how to prevent them by leading a healthy lifestyle. We sent out a survey strictly to Rutgers University students (both male and female between the age of 18 and 22) to find out their exercise and nutritional behaviors as well as their knowledge of health in general.

The Survey

Preliminary Questions
1. Gender (male, female)
2. Weight
3. Age
4. Area of study (college major)
**Nutrition**

Please answer the following questions according to the following scale:
1-Definitely does not describe me
2-Does not really describe me
3-Neutral
4-Somewhat describes me
5-Definitely describes me

5. I always make sure that I am eating a healthy diet.
6. I usually eat whatever I feel like eating because it has never been a problem for me.
7. I don't usually eat healthy because it is expensive and inconvenient.
8. I find myself eating unhealthy because most of my friends and people around eat unhealthy.
9. I don't have the time in my busy schedule to worry about eating healthy.
10. I tend to eat unhealthy foods when I am stressed.
11. I feel that I can eat unhealthy because I exercise enough.
12. I would probably eat healthier if there were more healthier food options easily available to me.

**Exercise**

Please answer the following questions accordingly

13. How many times a week do you exercise?
   A. 0-1   B. 2-3   C. 4-5   D. 6-7
14. Rate the intensity of your workouts.
   A. Low   B. Low-Moderate   C. Moderate   D. Moderate-High   E. High
15. What is the main reason that you exercise?
   A. Just for fun   B. Disease Control   C. Weight Management   D. All of the above   E. Other

**Other**

16. After you work out, do you feel that you
   A. Eat healthier   B. Eat the same as you normally would   C. Eat whatever you want
   because you just worked out
17. Do you feel that it is important to exercise when you are stressed (extremely busy or under pressure from school/family etc.)?
   A. Yes   B. No

**True/False**

Please answer the following questions accordingly
18. Obesity is highly correlated to high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, and stroke.
19. Obesity is highly correlated with many types of cancers.
20. If someone is overweight, they are less likely to suffer from depression.
22. On average, obesity has no effect on an individual's career success.
23. On average, overweight people receive worse healthcare and are more likely to be negatively treated by health professionals.
24. Obesity is purely genetic.
25. An individual who is obese is much more likely to die prematurely.
26. Obesity is preventable.

ANSWERS:  
*Nutrition (GB)*

As for the nutritional part, I asked several questions to find out whether or not Rutgers students are eating healthy. I wanted to ask these questions in a way that would find out why it is Rutgers students are eating unhealthy (if they are). Americans are saturated with information about nutrition, yet our country is still very unhealthy and obese. I wanted to see if I could find that psychological disconnect and what the causes are behind it. From the survey, this is what I have found.

§ 73% of Rutgers students feel that they always try to eat a healthy diet.

o The key word here is that they “feel” like they always eat a healthy diet. This may well be true, but what we are also trying to find out is if people actually know what eating healthy is.

§ 45% of Rutgers students claim that they do not eat whatever they want, meaning they make healthy food choices because they know what is good for them.

o 45% sounds about right, but it is also pretty low compared to the 73% in the above statistic. This probably means that some people who eat whatever they want probably think they are eating healthy.

§ 47% of Rutgers students admitted that they sometimes eat healthy because other people around them are eating unhealthy.

o This was a key statistic that I expected to see a high number. Sometimes even someone who is trying to be healthy feels pressured to eat unhealthy a number of different times. For example, family parties, out to eat with friends or if someone offers them food. Sometimes making the right choices is not always easy and this is definitely a key psychological problem for people.

§ 36% of Rutgers students find that they may sometimes be too busy during the day to worry about eating healthy.

o If someone is too busy to slow down during the day, this typically means they are probably resorting to eating fast food unless they have planned out their meals for the day and brought food with them. I very rarely see people doing that. I would probably say that this percentage is
even higher outside of Rutgers University based on the number of fast food restaurant chains that are around us.

§ 60% of Rutgers students claim that they usually eat unhealthy foods when they are stressed

o I am sure this is something everyone is victim to, but it is never good to resort to unhealthy foods. College students probably deal with a lot of stress too. Stress combined with unhealthy foods on a normal basis can be very damaging to the body.

§ 45% of Rutgers students feel that they can get away with eating unhealthy because they exercise enough

o I see this all the time in students and even my close friends. There is a common misconception that as long as your calories are equal or less than your calories out, everything is fine. A lot of students exercise and then follow it with an unhealthy meal. As long as people feel that their weight is under control, they are perfectly healthy.

§ 71% of Rutgers students claim that if there were more healthy food options available to them, then they would probably eat healthier

o This was the question I was most interested in. I am somebody who honestly tries to lead the healthiest diet I can and I still find myself having to eat something unhealthy because there is nothing around that is quality food. The country is way too overpopulated with fast food restaurants and not enough food stores that serve fresh quality meals. Most people don’t know when their next meal is and they worry about it when the time comes. If only there were only healthy food options around when people were in a hurry, then maybe people wouldn't be so overweight.

Exercise (MG)

For the exercise section of the survey, the aim was to find out how much students exercise, and what their motives and actions are after they exercise. The results exhibited about 40% of people work out six to seven days a week and a quarter of those surveyed exercise 4 to 5 times a week. The remaining 33.4% worked out 0-3 times a week. The frequency of activity could be attributed to the fact that those surveyed are Rutgers students who have access to a gym. The intensity of those work outs varied. About 40% would rate their exercise sessions to be moderate to high intensity while a quarter said they exercise at high intensity. The remaining 10% said they exercise at low to moderate intensities. For the reasoning behind working out, close to half of the students surveyed said they either had to work out because they were on a sports team at Rutgers, they wanted to stay in shape and build muscle or increase their self esteem. No one said they work out to prevent various diseases but this can be attributed to college aged people not feeling the need to worry about these diseases, like heart disease, diabetes, at this point in their lives. Close to a quarter of students said they work out to manage their weight and about 10% work out just for fun. After a workout session, about 44% of people eat healthier and 42% eat the same. A small percent of students said they eat whatever they want since they just worked out (13.9%).
The majority of students (75%) believed it was important to exercise when stressed and 25% didn’t believe it was important to work out when stressed.

Overall, the exercise portion of the survey showed that students are exercising for reasons such as weight management, recreational, to stay in shape, or a combination of all those stated. The majority of those surveyed work out between 4 to 7 times a week which is what is recommended by the ACSM (American College of Sports Medicine). The majority of students work out at a moderate to high and understood the importance of exercising while stressed. This shows students know that exercising is good for their health and that it can help alleviate stress. Although students know exercising while stressed is important, it maybe hard to fit aerobic activity into their busy schedules. Sometimes the last thing on one’s mind is getting gym while exams, papers, and presentation deadlines are approaching.

Once this positive behavior of working out is implemented, they tend to eat healthier or the same way they had previously been eating. All of these results show that students know how exercise and nutrition effect their body. At this point in their lives, they are using the knowledge they learned about exercise and nutrition and implementing it into their daily lives.

The disconnect (SN)

For the factual part of the survey, the aim was to ask basic questions on how diet, exercise, and obesity affected their health. If the participants answered most of the questions wrong than we could assume that the poor living choice were made out of ignorance. If the participate answered the questions correctly, showing that they understood the health consequences, but still participated in unhealthy living choices than this disconnect between what we know and what we do can be proven.

The results of the survey were basically what we predicted that they would be. The majority of participants were aware of most, if not all, the health risk concerned with obesity. Everyone who took the survey was aware that obesity is highly correlated to high blood pressure high cholesterol, heart disease and stroke. Surprisingly only a small majority of people were aware of the fact that obesity is also correlated with certain types of cancers as well. The majority of individuals also understood a lot of the negative psychosocial effects of obesity on individual. Most people also were aware that overweight individuals much were more likely to suffer from depression. The majority also saw that being obesity can affect an individual’s career, salary, and health-care. Overall every participate got the large majority of these factual questions correct showing that not only did individuals understand the physical health concern involving obesity but also the psychosocial impact of obesity as well.

So what information can be obtained from these results? These results prove that the public are aware of the consequences of their action and some may or may not choose to use their
knowledge for the better. By being aware of this disconnect, hopefully people can make changes and really thinking about long-term benefits rather than short term rewards.

Appendices

Chart 1
Chart 2

**I usually eat unhealthy when I am stressed**

- Definitely: 60%
- Neutral: 24%
- Never/Rarely: 16%

**If there were more healthy food options available to me, I would eat healthier**

- Definitely/Probably: 71%
- Neutral: 24%
- Never/Probably Not: 5%
What is the main reason you exercise?

- 1. Just for fun: 47.2%
- 2. Disease Control: 19.4%
- 3. Weight Management: 22.2%
- 4. All the above: 11.1%
- 5. Other: 0%

Key
1. Just for fun
2. Disease Control
3. Weight Management
4. All the above
5. Other
Is it important to exercise when stressed?

Bar 1 = yes
Bar 2 = no

How many times a week do you exercise?

Series 1, 1, 11.1, 11%
Series 1, 2, 22.3, 22%
Series 1, 3, 25.9, 26%
Series 1, 4, 41.67, 41%

Key (times per week)
1. 0-1
2. 2-3
3. 4-5
4. 6-7
Editorials

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Submitted to The Daily Targum
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Americans are saturated with information about how to live a healthy lifestyle, but continue to engage in unhealthy habits anyway. There is obvious evidence that the country is progressively becoming more obese. Not only is this leading to more health issues, but it is also leading to astronomical economic losses from medical costs. Some people think that there is nothing wrong with the way they live because they cannot foresee the consequences of their life choices. Eating a healthy diet as well as exercising regularly is essential for everyone. Eating healthy and exercising can reduce the risk of getting a number of different diseases and can prevent bone loss. A lot of people do not care enough or do not have the motivation to work hard and stay healthy. The fact is that the unhealthier a person’s lifestyle becomes, the more relatively inefficient they become at performing daily tasks. Being obese does not just mean being heavier; it creates increased laziness and lack of physical ability to do anything. As a person becomes more and more physically incapable at a younger age, they are going to have an extremely hard time staying active in their later years. This can even be detrimental to a person’s career. The United States has the highest percentage of obese people and I see it as a weakness for our country. It is embarrassing to say that my country has the most people that don’t care enough to take care of themselves. The rates are still increasing and something needs to be done. People say that part of the problem is that advances in technology make it easier for humans to accomplish their daily tasks; therefore humans are a lot less active. This is true, but it has also never been more convenient to attend a quality fitness facility at an affordable cost. It is also true that there are minimal healthy food options available when you are in a hurry to get somewhere. Most Americans depend on fast food as a major part of their diets. This problem can easily be fixed if people were to plan their meals. A lot of people do not realize they need to eat until they start to feel hungry, which leaves them no choice but to grab something fast and cheap. The excessive consumption of these poor quality and nutrient-deficient foods is a major contributor to the obesity epidemic. If people were to just place a little more importance on healthy habits, they would find themselves feeling a lot better. The facts about nutrition and exercise are clear, but taking this information seriously seems to be a serious issue for our country. The health trend needs to start kicking in so that people catch on and eventually draw in more and more people. Obesity has become the majority or norm in the United States. If more people start to counteract that by living healthier lives, then obese people may begin to feel the need to follow along.
“Disconnect between Knowledge and Action”

In an educated society such as America there seems to be a surprising disconnect between what individuals know and how individuals act. I think it would be safe to say that almost everyone is aware that eating poorly and not exercising will negatively impact an individual’s health and social performance. Yet people chose to ignore the facts and live unhealthy lives. If people know the facts, why the “disconnect”?

In order to directly observe the “disconnect” between knowledge and action a survey is being conducted at Rutgers University. This questionnaire consists of a series of questions that address an individual’s personal eating habits and daily exercise activity. The last set of questions in this survey were designed to test the participants knowledge on the consequences of eating poorly, not exercising, and being obese.

What results do we expect? Since the participants are a part of an educational environment we accept that most participants would pass almost all the factual questions on the test. We also expect to see the same disconnect that is seen in a regular population sample. The large majority of Rutgers students understand how to eat healthy; however, at dining halls throughout campus one can observe over-eating and unhealthy choices being made. Also most students know the physical and mental benefits of exercises; however, the gyms on campus aren’t crowded.

This survey is not to educate the university on obesity. College life and the demands society puts on individuals make them neglect their own health. Making people aware of the disconnect between knowledge and action could help benefit many aspects of their life. Hopefully by knowing the results of the survey people will slow down and actually use the education they pay for.

As a senior at Rutgers University, my fellow classmates and I are about to voyage out into the world. We are armed with the knowledge we have learned throughout our myriad years of schooling. The question is will we utilize the knowledge we have acquired over the course of our years? That is the question we tried to answer in one of the courses I am enrolled in this year. Specifically, we tried to answer this question based on the knowledge we learn about healthy eating habits and exercise. This knowledge can be directly implemented into our daily routine.
and enhance our lives but people rarely put into action the lifestyle changes that need to be done. This can be seen in the obesity epidemic that is blanketing our country currently.

To assess the discord between healthy lifestyles and level of knowledge, a survey is being distributed to the Rutgers community. This demographic was chosen because the student body as a whole is an intelligent group who has been exposed to facts about healthy lifestyles. Also, they have been told the effects of various diseases and cancers. In the survey, we pose questions about the students’ lifestyles and how much information they know about their bodies and the effects of certain behaviors. The results we get will be collated so we can see if students follow thru with the knowledge they learn. The only drawback with the survey is the honesty of the responses. Some participants may just glance at the questions and not really think about their response while others will truthfully answer everything. Since there is no way to check this, we just have to trust that participants selected the answer that corresponds to their lifestyle.

Personally, I think the survey will show that students know how to be healthy and what they should do but won’t act on it. As a student with, on average, 5 classes a semester, a job, and a social life, I know it is difficult to stay healthy and exercise daily. I try to work out four to five times a week but it is hard to keep up with that schedule sometimes.

In a fast paced world, healthy living often falls to the wayside but it shouldn’t. As the future of America, we need to take the knowledge we learn and put it in the forefront of our lives. Once your health is compromised, everything else seems less important. The disconnect between what we know and what we do is the underlying theme of our survey. This is an enlightening way to learn the habits of the Rutgers community and from here, go on to think of ways to bridge this gap.