



ONE-TWO-PUNCH

Starting exercise and a healthy diet at the same time packs a more powerful punch than beginning one before the other. Researchers from Stanford University found that making diet changes first often interfered with an individual's motivation to set up a regular exercise regimen because they became too focused on the dietary changes.

A second Stanford study concluded that big diet and exercise changes produce more long-term weight loss. Instead of making small, gradual changes, experts recommend setting big, bold goals. Plan on eating five to nine servings of fruit and vegetables each day. Cut out foods heavy in saturated fats and commit to exercising at least two and a half hours a week. Dieters who made major changes in their lifestyle were more likely to keep the weight off a year later.

WHERE'S THE BEEF?

Eating more red meat not only increases your chance of gaining weight, but also your risk of Type 2 diabetes, according to data collected from three recent Harvard University studies. Increasing your intake of red meat by as little as half a serving per day might raise your risk of developing diabetes by 48 percent over a four-year period. While the findings apply to all red meat, including hamburger, steak and pork, the risk of diabetes was greater when eating processed meat, such as hot dogs and lunch meat.

Processed meat may also raise your chance of heart disease and cancer, based on a separate long-term study conducted in 10 European countries. People who regularly ate large amounts of processed meat, such as bacon, sausage and ham, had a 72 percent greater chance of dying from heart disease.

Processed meat typically contains high amounts of saturated fat, sodium and nitrates. Meat can still be part of a balanced diet, when choosing small portions of lean, unprocessed cuts of red meat.



DANGEROUS DISTRACTION

When you're behind the wheel, using a hands-free phone with voice-activated texting might make you feel safer than using a hand-held phone, but recent studies show that hands-free devices can be just as distracting and risky. The American Automobile Association (AAA) Foundation for Traffic Safety measured a driver's degree of distraction created by various tasks. Surprisingly, using hands-free voice to text devices was one of the most mentally distracting tasks. And having a two-way conversation on a hands-free device was nearly as distracting as using a hand-held phone. The study concluded that using electronic devices—even when both hands are on the wheel—is likely to distract drivers and cause slower reaction times. A separate study by the Texas A&M Transportation Institute showed that sending voice-activated text messages was equally as dangerous as manually texting. Both types of texting doubled a driver's reaction time to roadway hazards.



BERRY BFF

Women who eat at least three servings of strawberries and blueberries per week may cut their risk of heart attack by up to one-third. Researchers from the Harvard School of Public Health in Boston and University of East Anglia in Norfolk, United Kingdom identified high levels of naturally occurring flavonoids in the berries, which may help prevent plaque buildup in the arteries and offer other cardiovascular benefits.

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