

# HERKIMER COUNTY OFFICE FOR THE AGING

HAPPY NEW YEAR

## NUTRITION NEWS

WRITTEN BY: SHANNON DAVIS, RD, CDN

LAYOUT BY: GINA PIZZO

### Happy New Year!

JANUARY  
2024

Happy New Year! Another year has come and gone, and with it some nutrition trends! A popular “diet” in 2023 was intermittent fasting. Generally, however, the trends that morph into lasting nutritional practices are the ones that are less extreme and lend themselves to maintenance.

Intermittent fasting is less about what you eat and more about when you eat. With this type of diet, you are only “allowed” to eat at certain times of the day. Research has shown that fasting for a certain number of hours each day or eating just one meal per day could contribute to a general weight loss. According to Johns Hopkins, the hours that your body goes without food allows it to exhaust its sugar stores and start burning fat. According to neuroscientist Mark Mattson, “Intermittent fasting contrasts with the normal eating pattern for most Americans, who eat throughout their waking hours. If someone is eating three meals day, plus snacks, and they’re not exercising, then every time they eat, they’re running on those calories

and not burning their fat stores.” Intermittent fasting works by prolonging the period when your body has burned through the calories consumed during your last meal and begins burning fat.

Check with your doctor before beginning any program like this. Implementing it (once you get approval) is not difficult. A “daily approach” restricts daily eating to one 6 to 8 hour period each day. For instance, you may choose to try 16/8 fasting: eating for 8 hours and fasting for 16. Another approach is the “5:2 approach.” This involves regular eating five days a week. For the other two days, you limit yourself to one 500-600 calorie meal. For example, eat normally every day except Monday and Thursday, when you restrict your intake to one meal daily.

Mattson goes on to say, “Many things happen during intermittent fasting that can protect organs against chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes, heart disease, age-related neurodegener-

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### MONTHLY

### EXERCISE

### Abdominal

### Contractions

While taking a deep breath, tighten the muscles of your abdomen.

Hold in this position for three breaths .  
Release.

Do 10 repetitions.

ative disorders, even inflammatory bowel disease and many cancers.”

In addition to weight loss, some research suggests the following additional benefits of intermittent fasting:

- ◆ Thinking and memory: studies discovered that intermittent fasting boosts working memory in animals and verbal memory in adult humans.
- ◆ Heart health: intermittent fasting improved blood pressure and resting heart rates as well as other heart-related measurements.
- ◆ Physical performance: young men who fasted for 16 hours showed fat loss while maintaining muscle mass. Mice who were fed on alternate days showed better endurance in running.
- ◆ Type 2 diabetes and obesity: in animal studies, intermittent fasting prevented obesity. And in other studies, obese humans lost weight while doing intermittent fasting. It also pointed to a reduction in levels of fasting glucose.
- ◆ Tissue health: in animals, intermittent fasting reduced tissue damage in surgery.

Keep in mind, this article is merely to discuss a current trend in nutrition. It is not intended to serve as a recommendation to try intermittent fasting. It is especially important to acknowledge that intermittent fasting may not be safe for all individuals, including children and teens under the age of 18, women who are pregnant or breast feeding, and people with Type I diabetes who use insulin to control their blood sugar levels.

As we age, many of us have a harder time sleeping, You may have trouble falling asleep, or you may find yourself waking up

in the middle of the night and having a harder time falling back to sleep. Sleep needs do not lessen as we age however. Research shows that sleep needs stay fairly consistent throughout adulthood. Exercise is one way to improve the quality of sleep you get. Studies show that individuals who engage in regular physical activity generally sleep better than inactive people. Sleep experts recommend, however, that you do your exercising at least three hours before bedtime. The ideal time to exercise is usually late afternoon. This has to do with body temperature. Body temperature is closely linked with sleep. Body temperatures rise during exercise and can take up to 6 hours to drop. Cooler body temperatures are associated with the onset of sleep. Therefore, it’s important to allow the body adequate time to cool off before trying to fall asleep.

Although it may seem contradictory, exercise can also boost your energy levels. Because exercise delivers oxygen and nutrients to your tissues, it helps your cardiovascular system work more efficiently. And improving the efficiency of your heart and lung health can boost your energy levels.

Try to vary your exercise as a combination of vigorous and moderate aerobic exercise (running, walking, or swimming). Squeeze in strength training at least twice a week.

A common resolution during the New Year is to lose weight. Some people may not need to lose weight but maintaining a healthy weight can also be a goal. And of course, most of us can improve our overall intake to promote our general health and for disease prevention.

One easy change that you could implement is to try adding one serving of fruit and one serving of vegetables every day. This is in addition to what you already normally eat. Adding an

afternoon snack of a fresh fruit and a handful of nuts is an easy change that will provide you additional protein and fiber without a lot of additional calories. It can also be a nice boost before you begin exercising.

Another relatively simple change to make (if your goal is to lose weight) is to simply cut down on your portion size at your largest meal. You would be surprised how many calories and how much fat you can cut out of your diet just by reducing portion size.

Remember to include a variety of foods from the major food groups: fruits, vegetables, whole grains; low fat dairy products and other lean protein sources (such as beans, legumes, and lean cuts of meat); nuts, seeds, and other healthy fats.

Try browsing through healthy recipes online and in cookbooks. Try to plan your shopping trips accordingly as well. Focus on fresh and unprocessed foods while shopping. The produce section is a great place to start! Try to limit your time in the snack and convenience food aisles.

Another tip for keeping yourself motivated is to make a change that the whole family can get on board with. It will be easier to have a partner or two to keep you accountable and on track. Following a “heart healthy” diet is an example. This isn’t a diet that is expressly for promoting weight loss (although you may see that as an added benefit). People of all ages can benefit from a heart healthy diet as we now know that childhood eating habits can play a role in the development of cardiovascular plaque and even cholesterol levels. To begin a heart healthy regimen, think of plants first! This includes fruit and vegetables, as well as beans, nuts, legumes, and other protein sources. A lot of these foods carry the added benefit of being already prepared. Quick snacks like grapes, berries, bananas, and nuts do not require any prep time.

Don’t forget to vary the way you prepare foods as well. Any food, over time, can become “boring.” Changing the way it is prepared can add zest. Speaking of zest, don’t forget spices! Preparing foods with different spices can also offer a variety for your palate.

Variation and moderation are two key components to sticking to any diet. Keeping these two factors in mind will allow you to continue experimenting with new foods while sticking to some old favorites! And, with moderation, an occasional treat won’t hurt and may even increase the likelihood that you’ll keep working on the resolution.





**HEAP**

**Emergency HEAP opens up on  
January 2, 2024**

If you are income eligible—  
Emergency Temporary Assistance  
may be available for payment of past due  
bills if your utilities are shut off or if you  
have a disconnect notice.

**Please call the HEAP Office 866-1195**

**HERKIMER COUNTY  
OFFICE FOR THE AGING**

109 Mary St., Herkimer, NY 13350

Phone: 315-867-1121

Fax: 315-867-1448

Email: [hcofa@herkimercounty.org](mailto:hcofa@herkimercounty.org)

Web: [www.herkimercounty.org](http://www.herkimercounty.org); then 'departments' then  
'Office for the Aging'

Funding for this newsletter is from the NYS  
Office for the Aging & Herkimer County

Here's a heart healthy recipe to get you started!

**Cajun Chicken Pasta**

- 4 ounces linguine pasta
- 2 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves
- 2 tsp Cajun seasoning
- 2 tbs butter
- 1 red bell pepper, sliced
- 1 green bell pepper, sliced
- 4 fresh mushrooms, sliced
- 1 green onion, chopped
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1/4 tsp dried basil
- 1/4 tsp lemon pepper
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/8 tsp garlic powder
- 1/8 tsp black pepper
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Add pasta and cook for 8 to 10 minutes or until al dente; strain.

Place the chicken and the Cajun seasoning in a plastic bag. Shake to coat. In a large skillet over medium heat, sauté the chicken in butter until almost tender (5 to 7 minutes).

Add the peppers, mushroom, and green onion. Saute and stir for 2 to 3 minutes. Reduce heat.

Add the cream, basil, lemon pepper, salt, garlic powder, and ground black pepper. Heat through. Add the cooked linguine, toss and heat through. Sprinkle with grated Parmesan cheese and serve. Enjoy!!