

## You Weigh What You Eat

Gaining a pound a year might not seem like such a big deal – at first. But over several years, gradual

weight gain can lead to obesity.

According to a new Harvard study, what you eat is definitely linked to what you weigh. But the kind of foods you put on your plate might be more important than how much you eat.

The study looked at the lifestyles of 120,000 people to learn what made people gain weight – in this case, an average of 3.35 pounds every four years. (That's almost 17 pounds gained in 20 years!) Three factors seemed to make the biggest difference:

- How much they slept
- How active they were
- What they ate

Sleeping fewer than six hours or more than eight hours a night led to weight gain. Getting regular physical activity

helped people lose 1.76 pounds every four years. On the other hand, participants who watched television for 3 hours a day gained a pound over the same time period. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Americans watch about 3 hours of TV each day.

In general, people gained weight when they ate potatoes, sweetened drinks, meat, and alcohol. People lost weight when they ate whole foods.

“The idea that there are no ‘good’ or ‘bad’ foods is a myth that needs to be debunked,” says Dr. Frank Hu, a Harvard physician who worked on the research.

### Recipe Re-Mix

Eating is a big part of holiday celebrations and family reunions. But if your family members are overweight, or have high blood pressure or diabetes, you might want to choose foods with them in mind. To make your traditional recipes and snacks healthier, use this link: [www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/activities/recipe\\_remix.html](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/activities/recipe_remix.html)

### Foods that cause weight gain:

- Potato chips – even fat-free chips
- Potatoes – including French fries
- Sugar-sweetened drinks
- Unprocessed red meat
- Processed meats
- Alcohol

### Foods that help you lose weight:

- Vegetables
- Whole grains
- Fruits
- Nuts
- Low-fat or nonfat yogurt

*New England Journal of Medicine & Purdue University*

Eating lots of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and nuts in place of processed foods can help you manage your weight.

*New England Journal of Medicine & Harvard School of Public Health*

## Want Your Student to Get Good Grades?

When people smoke around a child, they increase the child's risk of asthma and lung infections. Being sick a lot makes it hard for children to do well in school. A new study found that kids raised in a home with smokers were more likely to have learning disabilities or behavioral problems than were kids raised in a smoke-free home.

Harvard researchers looked at results from the 2007 National Survey of Children's Health. This included more than 55,000 children under age 12. Six percent of them were exposed to secondhand smoke in their home on a regular basis.

In the survey, parents were asked if a doctor or teacher had told them that their child had ADHD (attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder) or some other behavior or learning disorder. The researchers found that 8% of children exposed to secondhand smoke had learning disabilities. Another 6% had ADHD. And another 4% had behavioral and conduct disorders.

Also, children who lived in homes with smokers were 50% more likely to have two or three of these conditions. That was compared to children who lived with non-smokers. The study suggests that about 275,000 U.S. students do poorly in school because of secondhand smoke in the home.

About 4% of all school-age children have ADHD, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. And almost 1 million children have a learning disability, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

For your children's sake, make your home smoke-free. Insist that they go only to smoke-free events. If you smoke, quit. At the very least, do not smoke in your home or car. It's one of the best things you can do for you and your kids.

*Pediatrics & Center for Global Tobacco Control, Harvard School of Public Health*

Learn how to protect your children from secondhand smoke: [www.kidslivesmokefree.org/patients](http://www.kidslivesmokefree.org/patients)



**Q:** Is diabetes curable?

**A:** Go to <http://www.wellsource.info/wn/ask-diabetes.pdf> to read the answer from Don Hall, DrPH, CHES.

To ask your question, email: [evan@wellsource.com](mailto:evan@wellsource.com), subject line: Ask the Wellness Doctor. Emails with any other subject line will be directed to the spam folder.

**Health Challenge:** "Follow the Mediterranean Diet" available at: [www.wellsource.info/wn/hc-mediterranean.pdf](http://www.wellsource.info/wn/hc-mediterranean.pdf). People in the countries around the Mediterranean Sea typically live a long time.