

FIT/BITS

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HEALTH IN THE NEWS

Are Potatoes the New Oatmeal?

Increasing fiber intake through consuming whole grains like oatmeal has been shown to help lower high blood pressure. A new study reported at the annual American Chemical Society meeting reports similar results with the consumption of potatoes.

Potatoes have an undeserved bad reputation as a “fattening food,” mostly because people like to eat them as French fries, chips or baked with sour cream and butter. The truth is that a potato alone has about 110 calories and is loaded with vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients, especially if you eat the skin.



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FITNESS

Barefoot Running

One of the hottest trends in fitness is barefoot running. The trend has become so popular that “Barefoot Running: So Easy a Caveman Did It” was one of the best-attended talks at the recent annual American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) conference. It’s not really new, though, and many of you may remember Zola Budd, the famous South African/English Olympic barefoot runner. And of course, early man hunted and gathered barefoot for eons. However, at some point, someone got tired of digging thorns out of his or her foot and strapped on a covering to provide protection. The next thing you know, Nike was born.



So what’s behind the latest craze of barefoot running? Proponents claim that shoes inhibit natural movement and that running barefoot returns the runner to what the body does naturally, thus helping to prevent injury by letting the body do its thing. But is this true?

This is a hot topic that is rather controversial in the exercise science community. Here are some of the facts.

Shoes Alter Stride

A recent review article in the Journal of Foot and Ankle Research noted that when young children put on shoes, their stride length, or length of their steps, increases. The result is that more force is generated when their heels hit the ground as they walk. A study out of Kenya, home of barefoot runners, showed similar results. Children raised in the city and wearing shoes run differently from children raised in the country who go barefoot. The city children land on their heels with greater force than their country counterparts who land more softly on the balls of their feet.

Greater Strike Forces May Cause Injury

What part of the foot strikes the ground first and the strength of the force generated appears to be the crux of the issue for barefoot running. Most barefoot runners have a shorter stride and contact the ground on the balls of the feet with less force than a traditional runner. The problem is the transitional period between going barefoot and developing that shorter stride. Runners in shoes strike the ground heel-first with greater force than barefoot runners, but running shoes help

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Oblique Crunches

Muscles Targeted: Obliques, Rectus abdominis, Transverse abdominis, Core



START: Lie on your back with your feet in the air. Form a 90 degree angle in your knees and hips, keep your spine neutral and place your hands behind your ears.



FINISH: Lift your right shoulder off the floor, rotating it toward your left knee. Keep elbows wide.



START: Roll out on a stability ball until your lower back is supported by the ball. Upper body should be parallel to the floor with hands behind ears.



FINISH: Lift your right shoulder up and rotate toward the left. Keep elbows wide.

Ellen Histen and Shaum Carr,
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Curried Chicken with Apples



Ingredients:

- 1/2 large onion chopped
- 2 teaspoons oil (olive or canola)
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/2 large stalk celery, chopped
- 1 large apple (such as Fuji, Granny Smith), peeled and cut into bite-size pieces
- 1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger (optional)
- 1/2 cup matchstick carrots
- 1 to 2 tablespoons curry powder (you can choose a blend of mild, medium or hot spice)
- 3 to 4 medium-size boneless chicken breasts, cut into bite-size cubes
- 1/2 cup chicken broth
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1/2 cup plain nonfat yogurt
- Unsalted peanuts
- Cooked brown rice

Directions:

In a deep skillet, over medium high heat, saute onion in oil until it begins to soften. Add garlic, celery and apple. Cook a couple of minutes then add ginger and curry powder, stirring to combine. Push the ingredients to one side of the pan, add a little more oil, and brown chicken on both sides. Then, stir all ingredients together and add broth. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer, cover and cook about 5 more minutes until chicken is cooked through. Stir in yogurt. Season with salt and pepper and top with peanuts. Serve over rice.

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absorb this shock and help prevent injury. A new barefoot runner often will still have the longer heel-striking stride, and the stronger forces this stride produces translate up the unprotected leg—sometimes causing injury in the heel, leg, hip or spine. Even after developing a stride that strikes ball-of the foot first, many formerly shod runners still strike the ground with greater force than those runners raised barefoot. Indeed, there has been a reported increase in the types of injuries that might be expected as a result.

Protect Your Feet

One obvious drawback to barefoot running is the potential for injury from stepping on something in your path. A number of shoe companies have jumped on the bandwagon and make shoes for barefoot running. Although this would seem to be quite the contradiction, the shoes are designed to prevent surface injury but not alter stride. They sometimes have individual toes and sometimes look more like traditional shoes, but at least they prevent cuts, abrasions and puncture wounds from stepping on objects in your path.



Shoes Can Cause Injury

Some runners claim that barefoot running allows the body to move in a natural state which prevents injury. Indeed, there are a number of studies that have reported increased injury rates for runners wearing shoes based on their “foot posture.” For example, soft, cushioning shoes have been recommended for those with high arches and motion control shoes for those with low arches or flat feet. In these studies, runners with assigned shoes had more injuries and days missed due to pain than those who were randomly assigned shoes. The researchers involved recommend trying different shoes until you find something comfortable, no matter what the salesperson recommends based on your “foot posture.”

Listen to Your Body

If you’ve had trouble running in the past and think barefoot running might be the answer for you, give it a try with “barefoot” shoes to protect your feet from cuts. No gym will let you on a treadmill barefoot, either. If you plan to try barefoot running, experts advise slowly phasing into barefoot by taking off your shoes toward the end of your run for gradually increasing periods. Be aware of shortening your stride and landing on the balls of your feet, not your heels. Trying to change your stride is sure to be a challenging experience. The other issue is that you likely will wear shoes for most of the rest of your day, adding to the difficulty in transition. Be sure to listen to your body, though. Pain is always a sign of a problem, whether or not you are wearing shoes. According to Dr. Daniel E. Lieberman, a professor of evolutionary biology at Harvard and a dedicated barefoot runner himself, you must pay attention to your stride, “don’t lean forward and land lightly.” Humans may have evolved running barefoot, “but we did not evolve to run barefoot with bad form.”

Nancy Tashman, Perfectly Fit Corporate Services, Inc.

Sources:

Reynolds, Gretchen. “Are We Built to Run Barefoot?” 6 June 2011. www.nytimes.com. <<http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/06/08/are-we-built-to-run-barefoot/>>

Reynolds, Gretchen. “Phys Ed: Do Certain Types of Sneakers Prevent Injuries?” www.nytimes.com. 7 July 2010. <<http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/07/21/phys-ed-do-certain-types-of-sneakers-prevent-injuries/>>

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In the study, 18 subjects who were obese and had high blood pressure were given two servings of 6-8 golf-ball sized purple potatoes per day for one month. Purple potatoes were chosen because they have high levels of anthocyanin, a phytochemical associated with purple or red color in plants. The potatoes were cooked in a microwave without any added fats and were served with the skins on.

At the end of one month, the subjects showed an average of 4.3% drop in systolic pressure (the upper number in blood pressure readings) and a 3.5% drop in the diastolic pressure (the lower number). The majority of subjects showed this drop even while they were taking prescription blood pressure medication. The subjects did not gain weight over the course of the study.

These results are interesting given that potatoes have been shown to contain substances similar to ACE-inhibitors,



a class of blood pressure medications. Other types of potatoes were not included in the study, but the authors expect that they would show similar results.

If you decide to increase your consumption of potatoes to try to improve your blood pressure, you can add some flavor to the potatoes by tossing them in a small amount of olive oil before cooking. You also can try seasoning the potatoes with no-salt blends, salsa or hummus. Check the ingredients first, though, so that you are not adding any hidden salt that might defeat

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Apple Quinoa Salad



Ingredients:

1 cup apple juice
 1 cup water
 1 cup ivory quinoa, rinsed
 3/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
 2 medium red or green apples, diced, skins on
 1 cup sliced celery
 1/4 cup toasted slivered almonds
 2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint (optional)
 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
 1/4 teaspoon salt
 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
 1 lemon, washed and cut in half

Directions:

Add apple juice, water, quinoa and cinnamon to medium saucepan; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low; cover. Cook for 15 to 20 minutes or until liquid is absorbed. Cool slightly; transfer to large serving bowl and cover. Refrigerate for 1 hour.

Add apples, celery, almonds, mint, oil, salt and pepper to quinoa. Squeeze lemon juice over salad; toss to coat.

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the purpose!

Source: American Chemical Society. "Potatoes reduce blood pressure in people with obesity and high blood pressure." *ScienceDaily*, 8 Sep. 2011. Web. 12 Sep. 2011.
<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/08/110831205914.htm>

The End of Toning Shoes?

Believe it or not, sales of toning shoes topped \$1 billion last year. Amid this rush of consumers forking over big bucks for a product that does not work as claimed, the Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) Bureau of Consumer Protection has found Reebok, a division of Adidas, liable for \$25 million for making false health claims about their Easy-Tone shoes. The money is supposed to be refunded to consumers. Reebok has decided to settle rather than fight the fine, although the company disagrees with the Bureau's decision regarding its toning shoes.

People are always looking for a shortcut to fitness, and toning shoes are marketed as a quick way to improve health. But with mounting anecdotal complaints of falls, broken ankles and other injuries, the shoes were becoming controversial. These complaints combined with insufficient scientific evidence to support any of the health claims resulted in action by the Bureau.

Almost every athletic shoe manufacturer, with the notable exception of Nike, jumped on the toning shoe

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bandwagon because it was such a cash cow. The companies have been united in their claims that wearing their shoes gives you a better workout. The claim is based on their shoes causing an inherent "instability" that supposedly engages core and leg muscles for a better workout. We have always thought these claims were bogus, and now the government agrees. However, there is no word as to whether or not the Bureau will go after the other shoe companies.

Is this the end for toning shoes? Sales have been dropping in recent months, but it's unlikely that the shoes will be pulled from the market. It should be an end to the ridiculous health claims, though. After all, to paraphrase Nike, if you want to get fit; you have to do the work.

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Source: Martin, Andrew and Anahad O'Connor. "Reebok to Pay Settlement Over Health Claims." 28 September, 2011. www.nytimes.com.
http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/29/business/reebok-to-pay-in-settlement-over-health-claims.html?_r=1&ref=health&pagewanted=print

“A goal without a plan is just a wish.”

~ Antoine de Saint-Exupery