

THE DEAN'S LETTER FOR TUFTS NUTRITION



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WEIGHT LOSS BOOSTS IMMUNITY

Losing extra pounds by cutting calories may benefit your immune system as well as your waistline, Tufts researchers have found, and could be a sign that low-cal eating leads to longer life.

For the study, 46 overweight (but not obese) men and women, ages 20 to 42, were provided with a nutritionally complete but calorie-restricted diet for six months. The food cut their usual caloric intake by either 10 percent or 30 percent.

Professor **Simin Nikbin Meydani**, D.V.M, Ph.D., director of the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging (HNRCA) at Tufts, and colleagues judged the participants' immune strength by looking at their T-cells, a kind of white blood cell that helps the body fight tumors, viruses and bacterial infection. At the beginning and end of

the study, participants were given a skin test that primarily measures how well T-cells react to antigens. Researchers also drew blood to assess T-cell proliferation.

As expected, both groups lost pounds, but they also boosted their immune response by 30 to 50 percent. The group that cut a higher percentage of calories showed the biggest changes, but even those who lost a few pounds saw improvements.

"That's good, because it means you don't have to do heroics before you can see a benefit," says Meydani, who also heads the HNRCA's nutritional immunology lab.

BRING BACK HOME ECONOMICS

A *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* commentary co-written by Professor **Alice Lichtenstein**, D.Sc., director of the cardiovascular nutrition lab at the HNRCA, calls for teaching basic food preparation skills in schools.

"As children transition into young adulthood, they should be provided with knowledge to

harness modern conveniences (e.g., prewashed salad greens) and avoid pitfalls in the marketplace (e.g., prepared foods with a high ratio of calories to nutrients) to prepare meals that are quick, nutritious, and tasty," the authors wrote. "It is important to dispel the myths—aggressively promoted by some in the food industry—that cooking takes too much time or skill and that nutritious food cannot also be delicious."

WOMEN FALL MORE AFTER LARGE DOSE OF VITAMIN D

New research suggests women ages 70 and older who took a yearly high dose of vitamin D had a higher rate of falls and fractures compared with women who received a placebo. The study appears in *JAMA*.

Bess Dawson-Hughes, M.D., director of the Bone Metabolism Laboratory at the HNRCA, who co-wrote an editorial about the study for *JAMA*, says the body may have responded as if the dose were a toxicity threat.

Although the once-yearly dose was created to make it easier for women to get their vitamin D, the evidence suggests that it is too much vitamin D (in this case, 500,000 international units) to give at one time. The Institute of Medicine's recommended daily dose is 600 IUs.

The researchers randomly assigned 2,256 women to receive an annual oral dose of vitamin D or a placebo for three to five years. Women in the vitamin D group suffered 26 percent more fractures and 31 percent more falls than women in the placebo group.

FACULTY AND STAFF NEWS

Patrick Connell has been promoted to manager of educational technology.

Jacqueline Kral joined the advancement team as associate director for corporate and foundation relations. She will focus her efforts on the Friedman School and the HNRCA.

Mark Krumm was named director of communications to better reflect his responsibilities at the school.

Heather McMorrow has been promoted to associate director of academic initiatives. it. Never discount your insights. They are precious. Use feedback and criticism from others to hone your ideas so that they penetrate. Then find an audience and be heard in a loud voice."

Fang Fang Zhang has joined the Friedman School in the Nutritional Epidemiology program. She has an M.D. from Shanghai Medical University, and a Ph.D. from Columbia University. Following graduation, she joined the University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth as an assistant professor of epidemiology. Zhang's research focuses on how cancer risk is affected by behavioral factors such as diet and physical activity. She is a recipient of the Career Catalyst Award from Susan G. Komen for the Cure to study the integrated effect of energy intake, body size and physical activity on breast cancer risk. Building upon previous collaboration, this project uses resources of the Breast Cancer Family Registry (BCFR). She also leads several epidemiologic studies related to DNA methylation and cancer risk. Zhang is studying the role of DNA methylation in childhood acute lymphoblastic

leukemia. She is also carrying out studies within the North Texas Healthy Heart Study to investigate whether diet, physical activity and body composition are related to patterns of DNA methylation. She received the Research Rising Star Award from UNT Health Science Center in 2009 and the Anna C. Gelman Award for Excellence in Epidemiology from Columbia University in 2007. She is teaching epidemiology methods and is an author of 30 journal articles.

HERE & THERE

Adjunct Instructor **Antonio Donini**, a senior researcher at the Feinstein International Center, gave the keynote speech at the Australia Council for International Development annual humanitarian forum in Melbourne. He spoke on "Humanitarianism in the 21st Century: Lessons from Afghanistan and Other Recent Crises." He also gave a briefing to Melbourne-based academics.

Professor **Peter Walker**, Ph.D., is part of an advisory group organized by the United Kingdom Department for International Development to help it develop the UK's new humanitarian aid policy. He also went to New York to present the Feinstein International Center's Humanitarian Horizons research to a gathering of the U.N. agencies and missions to the U.N.

AWARDS & ACCOLADES

For the second year, students from the Friedman School have been selected for the Dow Sustainability Student Challenge. **Amanda Beal** and **Ellen Tyler**, who just finished their first year in the Agriculture Food and Environment (AFE) program, were selected as one of three winners from Tufts. Their project, which has already included a series of forums in Maine, focuses on "an innovative and replicable framework for bringing two food producer communities together that have historically faced sustainability issues separately. The goal of this project, 'By Land and by Sea: Connecting Maine's Farming and Fishing Communities,' is to give farmers and fishermen an opportunity to identify areas for collaboration that will enable them to develop strategies which benefit shared natural resources and build resilient food systems." Beal and Tyler share the \$10,000 prize for their work. Tufts is one of only seven universities worldwide chosen to participate in this program with Dow. In October, Tufts will host the presentation ceremony for the challenge, which will include winners from all seven participating universities. **Melissa Bailey**, a Ph.D. candidate in AFE, was selected as a Dow Challenge winner in 2009.

The 2010 HNRCA awards were presented on May 24. The winner of the Irwin H. Rosenberg Award for excellence in predoctoral research was **Munhyong Pae** for research on "Green Tea Catechins and Immunity." Other nominees included **Michael Corcoran**, N12, and **Emily Farina**, N10. The winner of the Hamish N. Munro Award for excellence in postdoctoral research was **Thomas van Himbergen** for research on the "Regulation of Cholesterol Biosynthesis." Other nominees included **Qingning Bian** and **Zhihong Ren**. The winner of the Robert M. Russell Scientific Achievement Award for the most cited primary paper from the HNRCA published in the year 2007 was **Martha Savaria Morris** for her work on "Folate, B Vitamins and Cognitive Function," based on the paper "Folate and Vitamin B-12 Status in Relation to Anemia, Macrocytosis and Cognitive Decline in Older Americans in the Age of

Folic Acid Fortification" (Morris MS, Jacques PF, Rosenberg IH, Selhub J., *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 2007, 85:193–200.)

Jean McShea, one of the dedicated nurses in the Metabolic Research Unit at the HNRCA, has been awarded one of Tufts University's "Unsung Hero" Distinction Awards for accomplishing the extraordinary every day.

Former Tufts Professor **Kathleen Merrigan**, now deputy secretary of the USDA, was voted one of the world's 100 most influential people by *Time Magazine* readers.

FRIEDMAN FACULTY IN THE NEWS

For a health.com article that appeared on CNN online, Professor **Jeffrey Blumberg**, Ph.D., commented on a new Women's Health Initiative study that found vitamin E reduced the risk of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease by 10 percent. "The effect appears to be modest," Blumberg said. "But for something for which there isn't really any effective therapy and tends to be a degenerative condition, anything that would reduce the risk even somewhat is not an insubstantial benefit."

Professor **Alice Lichtenstein**, D.Sc., wrote a letter to the editor that appeared in *The New York Times*. Her response to an article about use of sugar in place of high-fructose corn syrup in foods pointed out: "Obesity and its associated ills are a result of overconsumption of calories. If we want to get serious about fighting the obesity epidemic, we need to focus on the major cause—eating too much food and drinking too many beverages that contain calories, as well as many Americans' lack of physical activity—and not get bogged down in the weeds."

Associate Professor **Miriam Nelson**, Ph.D., spoke with *USA Today* about her new book, *The Strong Women's Guide to Total Health*, and the benefits of walking briskly, one hour per day. "You should feel that your heart rate is elevated. But it is not so intense that you are sweating a lot, unless, of course, it is hot outside. And remember that exercise intensity is relative. A brisk walk for one lady may be a stroll for another."

Associate Professor **Parke Wilde**, Ph.D., was interviewed for a *USA Today* article that looked at food stamp use and shopping habits. Because Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program funds are allocated at the beginning of each month, "a good chunk of people buy early in the month and store for later use," said Wilde. That means that they often run out of food by the end of the month. Wilde and others have proposed a simple change: Pay SNAP money twice a month, not once.

RACING FOR HER FATHER

Each year, 200 runners make the journey from Hopkinton to Boston to support nutrition, medical and fitness programs at Tufts University. Read online about one Friedman School alumna's fulfilling experience as a first-time marathoner and fundraiser with the Tufts

President's Marathon Challenge team at <http://alumni.nutrition.tufts.edu>

Are You Inspired?

Inspired by the Friedman School's work, 1,950 people have made a gift to support our mission this fiscal year. The year ends June 30, so please take a minute to read about the current students who are grateful for your annual fund gift and learn why alumni and faculty choose to support the school. Visit <http://alumni.nutrition.tufts.edu> to read their stories.

Your gift provides needed dollars for scholarships, faculty development and research. Please give online today: www.nutrition.tufts.edu/givenow.

Questions about your gift? Please contact Sean Devendorf at sean.devendorf@tufts.edu or 617.636.2949.

TUFTS LOAN REPAYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Tufts Loan Repayment Assistance Program (LRAP) is accepting applications for the 2010 award year. LRAP helps selected Tufts graduates employed full time in the public or nonprofit sectors repay a portion of their annual educational loan debt. All Tufts graduates (with an undergraduate, graduate or professional degree) who are employed in the public service professional arena are eligible to apply. Educational loans must be certified by the university's Financial Aid Office as having been incurred at Tufts. The amount of LRAP awards may vary each year. Applicants must be in repayment or grace period status on their Tufts-certified student loans.

The LRAP application deadline date is September 1, 2010. Please visit the LRAP website <http://lrapp.tufts.edu> to get more information and to download an application, or contact the LRAP office at lrapp@ase.tufts.edu with any questions.

COMING RIGHT UP

A Capitol Idea

Join the Friedman School Alumni Association's Washington, D.C., chapter for a cocktail reception on Thursday, June 17, from 6 to 7:30 at Urbana Wine Bar. Help welcome the Friedman School student interns and recent graduates to D.C. and network with fellow Friedman School alumni. All are welcome! Please register online: <https://secure.www.alumniconnections.com/olc/pub/TUF2/events/TUF22300748.html>

IFT Conference Reception in Chicago

Join the Friedman School for its first reception at the annual meeting and food expo of the Institute of Food Technologists on Monday, July 19, from 5 to 6:30 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency McCormick Place, 2233 S. Martin Luther King Dr., Chicago. Register online: <https://secure.www.alumniconnections.com/olc/pub/TUF2/events/TUF22300751.html>

Positive Deviance Workshop

The Positive Deviance Initiative (PDI) will host a two-day interactive workshop on July 26-27

that will provide clarity about what the PD approach is and when and how to use it. The workshop will feature keynote speaker Richard Pascale, leading worldwide business consultant, respected scholar, and best-selling author. Pascale's most recent book, *The Power of Positive Deviance*, which he co-authored with Jerry Sternin and Monique Sternin, was released in June 2010.

The PDI is offering a 10 percent discount to Tufts faculty and staff, and is also offering a special discounted rate for all students. You must register by July 1 to take advantage of these special rates. To register and to learn more about the forum and the PD approach, visit: http://www.positivedeviance.org/news_events/pdworkshop.html

The deadline for the next issue of the *Dean's Letter for Tufts Nutrition* is Wednesday, August 25. Please send your submissions to Julie Flaherty at julie.flaherty@tufts.edu.