

# Valley Health

Friday, November 8, 1988

## Good nutrition is part of good health and good grades

Dear Dr. Meinig:

When I look at the poor breakfasts most children eat these days and all the junk food they consume the rest of the day, I get concerned about how they can do their class work. Have their been any studies about the relationship of grade levels and one's nutrition?

E.B.

Dear E.B.:

Quite a lot of research has been done about diet and nutrition's benefits for the learning disabled and for hyperactive children, but not too much about the relationship that eating habits have on the grade levels of the average school child.

The few studies that have been done have demonstrated very significant results, even though the diet programs used were far from optimal.

A good example was a program that involved 71 percent of students in Lawrence, Massachusetts.

The year before the program was initiated, the participants tested significantly lower in reading and math and had marginally lower language scores than non-participants.

Three months after these students were furnished a simple morning meal of juice, cereal and milk, the scores showed notable improvement. Also, tardiness and absenteeism declined remarkably. Those who scored higher on the first test scored even higher on subsequent ones! This study was conducted by the School of Nutrition at Tufts University in response to a Massachusetts law that provided breakfasts for need children.

Let's see what happened to New York school kids after changes were made in their school's lunch program. This is from a report by "Insight:"

The scholastic performance of NYC school children markedly improved after their school lunches were modified



**Dr. George**

By George Meinig, DDS

to reduce the amounts of sugar and food additives.

Researchers measured the students' academic achievement by their performance on

the standardized California Achievement Test, which was administered annually to students in the area's 803 participating public schools. Each school's mean national percentile rank was determined. For three of the four years that the study covered, and for each year that changes were made, rankings of the 803 schools rose.

The first year, sucrose levels in the children's lunches were restricted and two synthetic food colorings were eliminated; that year, the schools' mean national percentile rose by 8.1 points to 47.3.

The next year, all foods containing synthetic coloring or flavoring were eliminated, and rank increased to the 51.2 percentile. No further diet restrictions were made the following year, and rank decreased slightly, from 51.2 to 50.8.

The following year, when the food additives BHT and BHA were removed from lunch foods, percentile rank increased to 54.9.

The academic gains in three years propelled NYC schools from 11 points below the national average to 5 points above the mean, says S. Schoenthaler, a professor of sociology at California State College at Stanislaus, located in Turlock,

who analyzed the study data.

In another study, the leading British medical journal *Lancet*, in the January 23, 1988 issue, reported on the effect a multiple vitamin/mineral supplement had on children's intelligence:

Ninety, 12 and 13 year old boys and girls were split into three equal groups. One group took a daily vitamin/mineral supplement, the second took a placebo (sugar pill) and the third did not take any tablets.

After eight months, the groups were retested for verbal and nonverbal intelligence. While there was no change in the verbal intelligence of all groups, the vitamin/mineral supplement group showed a significant increase in the nonverbal intelligence testing over the other two groups.

It was interesting to note the preliminary dietary analysis of the children showed them to be low in iron, zinc and molybdenum.

At the college level, Dr. Hans

Kuglar studied 400 students and found those who survived the first year, had passing grades, were free of depression and had more new experiences than those who practiced reasonable nutrition and got enough sleep.

Whenever I mention this subject, someone is bound to say that they know a top "A" student that eats nothing but junk food. Inasmuch as students' appetites are so ferocious and that they usually will eat anything and everything, I contend, in spite of themselves, they obtain a fair amount of required nutrients.

This is such an important question and subject for every student, for their parents and for our country that every family must encourage in-depth research be initiated.

**Everyone has questions about nutrition. Send yours to Dr. George, C/O Ojai Valley News, Box 277, Ojai, CA 93024.**

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