



Contact:

Ryan Craig
Healthy Living Academies
(917) 575-8903
rcraig@healthylivingacademies.com

February 2006 JAMA Low-Fat Diet Study: Too Little, Too Late Yields Not Much

Very Low-Fat Diets Are the Best Bet for Significant and Sustained Weight Loss

(Cerritos, CA – February 14, 2006) In the wake of a landmark study published last week in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, many pundits and media reports now claim that the days of the low-fat diet are numbered. One television personality signaled his liberation from a low-fat diet by eating a candy bar on the air. The Women’s Health Initiative Dietary Modification Trial (WHI) study evaluated the health benefits of a low-fat diet for older women and, in measuring these benefits in terms of rates of cancer and cardiovascular disease over eight years, found no significant benefits. Moreover, participants did not lose weight. However, a detailed analysis of the WHI results, in addition to successful weight loss outcomes from Healthy Living Academies’ programs recently presented at the 2005 meeting of the North American Association for the Study of Obesity, demonstrate that this study provides no relevant information about the optimal diet for weight loss, particularly for young people.

According to Daniel S. Kirschenbaum, Ph.D., Clinical Director of Healthy Living Academies, and a professor at Northwestern University Medical School, while many aspects of the WHI methodology were excellent, the study’s results in no way suggest that very low-fat diets are not extremely effective for weight loss and long-term weight control.

“First of all,” said Dr. Kirschenbaum, “this was not a particularly low-fat diet. In the WHI’s final assessment, more than 85% of participants failed to consume the targeted level of fat consumption (20%) which, even if they had matched that standard, is still twice as high as the optimal level of fat consumption for weight control (10% or less). On average, the WHI

participants, who were overweight but were NOT trying to lose weight in this research, reported eating approximately 29% of calories from fat which isn't materially different than the average American intake of 34%.”

“The best research today, including evaluations of the Healthy Living Academies’ programs,” added Dr. Kirschenbaum, “demonstrates remarkable results for weight loss and long-term weight control by incorporating a very low-fat diet, about 67% less than the participants consumed in this study. So saying that the WHI study demonstrates that low-fat diets don’t promote weight loss is like saying that aspirin is ineffective for headaches after taking a third of the recommended dosage.”

Dr. Kirschenbaum cautioned the media to resist exaggerating the results of the WHI, especially with regard to children, adolescents and young adults who are struggling with their weight. “WHI studied post-menopausal women ages 50-79, with an average age of 62. These participants had been consuming a moderate or high-fat diet for their entire lives. It’s unrealistic to expect significant improvements in health from such a minimal intervention that clearly failed to achieve its own modest goals. This is truly a case of ‘too little, too late yielding not much.’”

“In contrast,” added Dr. Kirschenbaum, “results from Healthy Living Academies immersion programs (weight loss camps and the world’s first boarding school for overweight teens, Academy of the Sierras), which include a very low-fat diet for significantly overweight participants ages 11-22, demonstrate among the best outcomes ever reported for weight loss among children and adolescents. Last year Healthy Living Academies announced that participants in its programs continued to lose weight after returning home. Ninety-one percent of alumni either maintained or continued to lose weight during the follow-up period, and the average alumna lost an additional 7.4 pounds during a 6-9 month follow-up.

“Obesity is the most significant health challenge facing America’s youth and it’s essential that the media get this story right,” concluded Dr. Kirschenbaum. “As detailed in my paper published in the November issue of the medical journal *Patient Care*, science tells us very clearly that a very low-fat diet can help people, including overweight young people, lose and sustain weight loss more consistently, comfortably and effectively than higher levels of fat consumption.”

Healthy Living Academies is Aspen Education Group’s division that operates residential schools and summer programs addressing America’s crisis of pediatric and adolescent obesity. To learn more, visit www.healthylivingacademies.com or call (866) 364-0808.

Aspen Education Group is recognized nationwide as the leading provider of education programs for struggling or underachieving young people. Aspen's 33 programs in 12 states provide a range of therapeutic interventions, including boarding schools, residential treatment and wilderness therapy. For more information, visit www.aspeneducation.com or call (888) 972-7736.

###