

News from the April 2009 Journal of the American Dietetic Association

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CHICAGO – The April issue of the Journal of the American Dietetic Association features research studies focusing on vegetarian eating plans; dietary quality among children; and relationships between eating habits and metabolic syndrome.

Vegetarians Face Increased Risk of Eating Disorders

While vegetarians tend to eat healthier diets and are less likely than non-vegetarians to be overweight or obese, they may be at increased risk for binge eating with loss of control, and former vegetarians may be at increased risk for extreme unhealthful weight-control behaviors, according to researchers at University of Minnesota, University of Texas and St. John's University.

The researchers analyzed vegetarianism, weight, dietary intake and weight-control behaviors data from a population-based study in Minnesota of more than 2,500 males and females between 15 and 23. They found vegetarians ate healthier diets than non-vegetarians when it came to fruits, vegetables and fat intake. Among young adults, current vegetarians were less likely to be overweight or obese.

However, adolescent and young adult vegetarians were also more likely to report binge eating with loss of control compared to non-vegetarians. Among adolescents, former vegetarians were more likely to engage in extreme unhealthful weight-control behaviors. And among young adults, former vegetarians were more likely to engage in extreme unhealthful weight-control behaviors than people who either were currently vegetarians or had never followed a vegetarian eating plan.

Examples of extreme unhealthful weight-control behaviors included “took diet pills,” “made myself vomit,” “used laxatives” and “used diuretics.”

The researchers conclude: “Adolescent and young adult vegetarians may experience the health benefits associated with increased fruit and vegetable intake and young adults attain the added benefit of decreased risk for overweight and obesity. However, vegetarians may be at increased risk for disordered eating behaviors, such as binge eating and unhealthful weight-control behaviors.

“Study results indicate that it would be beneficial for clinicians to ask adolescents and young adults about their current and former vegetarian status when assessing risk for disordered eating

behaviors. Furthermore, when guiding adolescent and young adult vegetarians in proper nutrition and meal planning it may also be important to investigate an individual's motives for choosing a vegetarian diet."

Other studies published in the April 2009 Journal of the American Dietetic Association include:

- Diet Quality of Preschoolers in Greece Based on The Healthy Eating Index; The GENESIS Study
- Underreporting of Food Intake among Mexican/Mexican-American Women: Rates and Correlates
- Dietary Intake, Eating Habits and Metabolic Syndrome in Korean Men
- Assessing Dietary Variety in Children: Development and Validation of a Predictive Equation
- Food Groups and Renal Cell Carcinoma: Results from a Case-Control Study
- Consumption of Recommended Food Groups among Children from Medically Underserved Communities.

Journalists can obtain review copies of studies in the April 2009 Journal of the American Dietetic Association. E-mail media@eatright.org.

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