

19 February 2019

Media Release – The Food and Exercise Link

From: NZ Register of Exercise Professionals



The Food and Exercise Link

While the old saying 'you can't out exercise a bad diet' may still be true, it turns out regular exercise is a great way to motivate and support maintaining a good diet.

Exercise and nutrition have always been closely linked; whether it's understanding the fuel needed to exercise, a lifestyle plan that incorporates changes to both food and physical activity, or just understanding that both exercise and good nutrition are needed for living a long and healthy life.

While keeping active and eating well are two separate goals, they fit together. We also know that many people find it challenging to make significant changes to their diet, so the latest research out of the University of Texas is good to hear. Their research indicated that becoming more active has a roll on effect on what people chose to eat, with the subjects they studied taking up an exercise programme started making more healthier food choices than when they were sedentary.

This new research leads to posing some questions. Instead of taking on an all or nothing approach, and making significant changes to food and exercise, perhaps in some circumstances taking a more moderate approach, and making smaller, more sustainable changes a few at a time could lead to more sustainable results. Could it be that while in the long term, a focus on healthy eating and regular physical activity is essential, that if you are one of the many who struggle to manage change, that you focus on moving and physical activity first.

The team at the University of Texas looked at just over 2500 sedentary young adults for 14 weeks. The subjects were not instructed to make any significant changes to their diets but started regular exercise. Within a few weeks it was noted that the newly exercising subjects were making better nutritional choices, and preferences for unhealthy foods had reduced. The study was not designed to measure what the driver was behind this change in eating habits, but other studies have discovered some of the chemicals our body releases are increased when we exercise, including mood enhancing and appetite suppressing hormones. It may be this that meant the subjects regular exercise created a pathway to other, equally positive health habits.

Often the commonly described benefits of exercise tend to be the more obvious ones such as increasing fitness levels and weight reduction, but it's clear that these benefits are the tip of the iceberg, with benefits such as habit changing, and wellbeing gains just as valid.

If you are one of the many people looking at making better choices about what you eat, there's good reason to think that your first choice should be to start exercising. And what better motivation than knowing your choice to move regularly may lead to making those negative dietary habits easier to kick.

References:

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41366-018-0299-3>

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NZ Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) - Independent not for profit quality mark of exercise professionals and facilities. Using REPs Registered Exercise Professionals is the “warrant of fitness check” that exercise professionals and facilities meet New Zealand and internationally benchmarked standards to deliver safe exercise advice and instruction. REPs is affiliated globally to other national exercise professional registers representing over 210,000 exercise professionals through the International Confederation of Registers for Exercise Professionals (ICREPs) - www.icreps.org

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Exercise Association of New Zealand - Not for profit exercise industry representative organisation. Its *mission is to proactively support a sustainable exercise and fitness industry in New Zealand by growing participation in structured exercise through advocacy, information and industry standards.*

