What the Health is the latest sensational Netflix documentary to make sound waves across the internet. I admittedly dragged my feet on checking it out, since most food documentaries confuse the consumer more than help them, usually trying to convince them there is only one way to eat. In this case, they do the same – and that one way involves eliminating all animal products from our diet.

Regardless, after so many questions about the documentary, I gave in to see what all the hype was about. Maybe, just maybe, this one was different. It is important to note that most of the people involved with the documentary, from the directors to the health professionals interviewed throughout, are vegan. This certainly plays a role in the perspective, direction and theme of the rest of the movie.

The documentary kicks off with an individual looking back on his youth, where he admittedly lived off hot dogs and cold cuts, then questions if he would be better off smoking his entire childhood. He then continues on to try to suggest health organizations, like the American Diabetes Association and American Cancer Society, are hiding the truth about diet.

{ CONTINUED on Page 4... }
FOODS AND MY BABY: PERSPECTIVES FROM A PREGNANT MOM

by RACHEL BASSLER, RDN, CSSD, LDN

Most pregnant women are bombarded with health and nutrition information via handouts from their doctor, advice from friends and family, or pregnancy smartphone apps (confession: I have three). Many times, information is geared towards what foods to avoid like raw meat, fish with mercury, unpasteurized cheeses and alcohol. While this information is extremely important for the health and safety of both mother and baby, it’s also crucial to focus on foods and nutrients that are beneficial during pregnancy.

My mother had a stillborn with anencephaly (a neural tube defect), so throughout my pregnancy, I have focused on getting optimal amounts of dietary folic acid in addition to the folic acid supplement and prenatals prescribed to me by my doctor. This is because folic acid has long been documented to help prevent neural tube defects, one of the most common birth defects.\(^1\) Therefore, pregnant women are often advised to increase their intake of this nutrient and mandatory fortification of enriched cereal grain products with folic acid was authorized in 1996 in the United States.\(^2\)

Additionally, I have focused on other common recommendations for pregnant women, such as proper hydration, getting adequate amounts of protein, calcium and omega-3s, eating a wide variety of foods, etc., but then I thought –

what more could I be doing (and eating!) to benefit my baby?

And this is when I felt very fortunate to be working at the Egg Nutrition Center. We are constantly reading the latest nutrition research related to eggs and egg nutrients, as well as working with some of the top nutrition scientists at universities across the country. The latest findings are pointing to a role for eggs and egg nutrients on brain development and function. Based on what I’m seeing, I firmly believe that eggs should be on the top of the list of recommended foods for pregnant women.

There are two nutrients found in eggs that have been linked to cognition – choline and lutein. Choline was recognized as an essential nutrient in 1998, so it’s still fairly “new” on many health professional’s radar. However, research has demonstrated that choline is important for fetal brain development, and enhanced memory and cognition (as well as improved cognitive performance in older adults!).\(^3,4\) In fact, in June of this year, the American Medical Association (AMA) recommended that choline be added to prenatal vitamins since most pregnant women don’t meet the recommended 450 mg/day. AMA stated that adequate choline intake during pregnancy is not only important to help with fetal brain/spinal cord development but also to help reduce incidence
of birth defects, like neural tube defects - so naturally this piqued my interest in the nutrient given my family history. Eggs have one of the highest amounts of choline of any food (unless you love to eat beef liver). Two large eggs contain more than half of the recommended intake for pregnant women.

Lutein is an antioxidant that has long been linked to eye health, but emerging research suggests a role in cognition as well. Similar to how lutein accumulates in the eye, it is also present in the brain. Two recent studies looked at the relationship between brain lutein concentrations and cognition in children. The researchers found that brain lutein levels were positively associated with academic performance. While more research is needed, the results to date are very interesting to this soon-to-be-mom.

So, while I’ve been following the advice to avoid certain foods during my pregnancy, I never miss my two eggs a day.

This gives me peace of mind that I’m providing my baby with choline and lutein to help his or her little brain to grow,

as well as other important nutrients like protein and omega-3s. And I hope it’s helping my brain out as well!

REFERENCES


ENC proudly announces that a new collection of recipes has been certified to meet the American Heart Association’s® heart-healthy nutrition requirements. This is exciting because the American Heart Association now allows recipes with whole eggs the opportunity to be certified as heart-healthy. Certified recipes must not exceed limits for calories, saturated fat, trans fat, sodium and added sugars. The Heart-Check Recipe certification nutrition requirements align with the American Heart Association’s dietary recommendations.

Check out the new Heart-Check certified recipes here: Eggnutritioncenter.org/heartcheckrecipes

* Heart-Check certification does not apply to scientific research by an organization other than the American Heart Association, opinions, and/or information reached through links unless expressly stated.

RESEARCH HOT OFF THE PRESS

Only 8.5% of pregnant women meet the choline recommendation, a nutrient important for infant brain development.

Read more here: Eggnutritioncenter.org/CholineIntakeResearch
A REVIEW OF WHAT THE HEALTH

by CHRISTOPHER R. MOHR, PhD, RD

Unfortunately, it’s easy to convince the uniformed consumer with the glitz and glam of a good story. As I often say, you can support or refute virtually anything when it comes to diet, if you slice and dice or cherry pick the data. And this documentary clearly selected individual studies to support a vegan lifestyle, ignoring the totality of the scientific evidence on diet and health.

The bold statements throughout the documentary are nothing more than scare tactics, but consumers aren’t aware that they’re such and this documentary surely has many people convinced they need to completely eliminate meat, eggs, dairy and any other animal or animal byproducts from the diet. And, sure, while no one can argue that eating more produce is certainly a wise idea, the notion that we have to give up all animal products to be healthy is just, plain false.

Below are a few comments from the documentary that I’d like to specifically address:

1. Eating processed meats is as bad for you as smoking. This made headlines recently. Again, on the surface, this sounds very scary. And in fact, the study cited for this particular fear-mongering comment is very different from what was reported. The study itself also never stated eating processed meat is as bad for you as smoking. That is the interpretation when confusing relative and absolute risk. Enjoying some bacon or a turkey sandwich on occasion is far from the being as dangerous as cigarettes, which is the statement made. While I wouldn’t encourage people to enjoy bacon for breakfast, a salami sandwich and ham for dinner, occasionally eating processed meats is no big deal.

NOW AVAILABLE: NEW FITNESS RESOURCES

Whether you’re a yogi, a runner or a professional athlete, proper nutrition is essential to both fuel your workout and recover after it.

To learn more, check out our new fitness resources at: [Eggnutritioncenter.org/Fitness](http://Eggnutritioncenter.org/Fitness)
2. Eating an egg a day is as bad as smoking five cigarettes. That statement alone is enough to scare people. It’s made worse by showing a mom sautéing cigarettes in a pan to feed to her kids for breakfast. Admittedly even vegan colleagues have laughed at this statement. Look, you may not get lung cancer by smoking, but the research overwhelmingly shows that it makes it harder for you to live a long, healthy life free from disease. On the flip side, eggs are one of the highest quality, least expensive sources of quality nutrition – from protein and choline to vitamin E and so many in between. Eat whole eggs. Enjoy whole eggs. And remember this documentary is so slanted you almost have to lay on your side to see it straight!

3. Drinking milk causes cancer. Are we seeing a pattern here? Again, the scientific consensus doesn’t support this claim.

4. Fish is toxic. No, actually, fish is one of the most nutritious foods in the world. The diet with more research than any other diet in the world is the Mediterranean Diet. And study after study after study demonstrates just how beneficial fish consumption is and encourages making it a regular part of the diet.

Sure, I could go on. But I think you get the point. The documentary is trying to convince everyone they too should follow a vegan diet. If you want to follow a vegan diet for whatever reason, go ahead. Is it the only way to live healthfully? Absolutely not. Is it a way to eat, just like most others? 100%.

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REFERENCES

SUSTAINABILITY FEATURE

PEARL VALLEY FARMS
Dave Thompson was a first grade school teacher who began hatching eggs at home for a science project for his class. He loved the hens so much that he opened Pearl Valley Farms more than 30 years ago. Now he works closely with his son, Ben Thompson, on their growing, self-contained operation. A self-contained farm means they manage everything from the hens to the feed to the processing plant to the delivery trucks. Creating self-contained farms are a way America’s Egg Farmers can reduce their environmental footprint. At Pearl Valley Farms, they are very passionate about their compost business. They work hard to ensure nothing on the farm goes to waste, so they collect, treat and sell the poop from the chickens to other farmers for their crops to use as fertilizer. Then, Pearl Valley can buy those crops to feed their hens.

To learn more about Dave, Ben, and Pearl Valley Farms, visit their website: www.pearlvalleyfarms.com
Eyes play a bigger role than the tongue in enjoyment of food. Sensory elements such as aroma can influence appreciation of beverages. The color of plates and positioning of food on plates can increase consumption in some patient populations.

Make a Sandwich

What makes that egg sandwich palatable? Toasted artisanal bread cut in arranged triangles, cooking skills or melted cheese? While flavor does play a part, its role is less than we think. Professor Charles Spence’s new book, *Gastrophysics: The New Science of Eating* has research suggesting that molten protein foods like runny yolks, melting cheese and care in arranging food on the plate play bigger roles than you might think. Gastrophysics, Spence says, is “the scientific study of those factors that influence our multisensory experience while tasting food and drink.”

Spence directs Oxford University’s Crossmodal Food lab. He leads studies on the environmental and other factors that determine our food preferences. A fundamental neuroscientific fact underlies his work. Taste sensation takes up about 1% of the brain. The eyes alone take up about 50% and play a bigger part in preference, though and hearing, as in music and crunch, play a bigger role than previously thought. The book is a great resource for clinicians and parents once you figure out how to apply the chatty presentation in clinical dietetics and at home. One set of clinically surprising findings is that music enhances the flavor of food. Such findings swarm in his book.

Morning Coffee and Eggs

For the most part, the food and beverage industry funds Spence’s research into the hidden sensory and subliminal dimensions driving eating behavior. He also has a team of famous British chefs that share in his projects. Chefs and scientists share an interest in paying attention to detail. The mix provides a sensitive touch to his work and thought. No wonder some airlines use his approach to improve in-flight meals.

Let’s start with improving your morning coffee. Coffee’s biggest pleasure comes from the aroma that titillates the retronasal part of the oral cavity he says. The plastic lid covering your farm-sourced, artisan-brewed java blocks the olfactory pleasure. Gourmets noticed the olfactory feature in other beverages. An arsenal of special glasses for wine varietals and liqueurs, like sherry schooners, exist to concentrate fragrances. Beer benefits from less than full glasses in order to appreciate their aroma. To overcome the loss of aroma, Spence finds the old-fashioned, lidded steins provide quantity while holding onto the brew’s fragrance. Japanese tea masters teach participants to hold an unlidded tea bowl tilted close to the nose to appreciate tea’s mild aroma. His research supports some food traditions and he takes things one step further.

Eggs get a modern mention from market research that can be applied at home. Research indicates
that showing high protein foods in motion, like dripping yolks and melting, cheesy lasagna leads to increased sales and consumption. Our brain is hardwired to equate motion with freshness. From the parent perspective, more is gained by modeling and goo than preaching.

Blue Plates and Alzheimer’s

In a pre-publication article for the journal *Flavour*, Spence reviews gastrophysics in the hospital setting. Simply using blue plates and increasing the contrast of colors between the plate and the food, for example, increases consumption in Alzheimer’s patients by 25%. Centering food on a plate also increases consumption. Neither of these factors have anything to do with flavor or textures. That’s neat support for the role of subliminal factors in appetite even in those with severe cognitive impairments. Such low cost inducements are worth their weight in gold. Older hospital patients come in with nutrient and weight deficiencies in spite of the overall obesity epidemic.

Spence’s love of food paints a wide canvas that deepens clinicians’ understanding of hidden factors that determine eating behavior. He contextualizes contemporary research with historic gastronomes such the Roman, Apicius, and France’s 18th century Brillat-Savarin. Gastrophysics, for me, provides additional science to support mindful eating which is rooted in the Japanese tea ceremony. Spence, meanwhile, roots his research in the work of the Futurists, a 1930s Italian art movement. The Futurists created all kinds of imaginative food presentation effects that are being revived or re-discovered by modern chefs. Futurists covered rooms in aluminum foil, a new product then. In the 16th century, Sen no Rikyu, the founding Japanese tea master, created a special tea room with walls covered with gold foil. He was criticized for extravagance. In our time, metallic shine is known to increase appetite. Foil on food is one of Spence’s top 10 ways to apply gastrophysics for the fun at heart. Use science to make believe you are an artist, tea master or to become a more effective clinician.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

OCT 13
World Egg Day
On {OCTOBER 13} join countries around the globe to celebrate the goodness of the egg. Visit www.WorldEggDay.com or follow @World_Egg_Day and #WorldEggDay on Instagram and Twitter!

OCT 21
Food & Nutrition Conference & Expo
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Chicago, IL {OCTOBER 21–24}

NUTRITION CLOSEUP
Credible Science, Incredible Egg

American Egg Board
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Chicago, IL 60631

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