

# Staying Alive



## Can thinking make you fat?

**MATTHEW EDLUND M.D.**

Contributing Columnist  
health@lbknews.com

Your brain may use between 25 and 30 percent of your body's calories, but its energy consumption does not vary much between sleep and feverish study. Yet how you use your brain can change your waistline.



With its great culinary past, Quebec is a good place to study interactions between food and brain. Researchers at Quebec City's Laval University decided to see what intellectual exercise did to food intake. Fourteen female students were asked to do three separate tasks before going to a "free" all-you-can-eat buffet.

The first task was simple — sit in a chair and rest. Task two involved reading a paper and penning a summary, while task three required them to finish sit down computer tests.

After the mental tasks, the women ate 25 percent more calories than when they sat resting.

Does this mean that physical rest leads to greater portion control?

Maybe.

The students had blood drawn from beginning to end of the experiment. Marked increases in cortisol occurred while doing mental tasks, and glucose and insulin fluctuated far more. In this as in many studies, stress makes people hungry. They eat more.

Stressed out people also watch a lot of television. Half of adult leisure time in the United States is spent in front of a television set. Studies across countries show that when people feel truly stressed and exhausted, they

watch more TV. Increased television watching also correlates with greater weight gain.

In the United States, where we are presently undergoing a fiscal crisis, energy crisis, government budget crisis, two major wars, a housing disaster, stock market free fall, a credit crunch, immense job losses, hurricanes and a bizarre presidential race, people are feeling stressed. Chances are they are going to eat a lot.

Stress does not mean everyone immediately reaches for comfort food. The brain's effect on food is powerful, and much of it can be used to counteract stress.

About two years ago a group at Harvard researched hotel maids. The maids were divided into two groups. Each were weighed, their waistlines measured, then observed for how much effort they spent on their jobs.

For the next step, the group was split in two. One group of maids kept on exactly as before. The other group was told that their work was effective exercise. Just by doing their jobs they were fulfilling all the U.S. government's recommendations for physical activity. Their regular work could make them healthy.

At the end of the study period, the control group weighed about as much as before. The group told they were "exercising" lost considerable weight and lowered their cholesterol and lipid levels.

### Don't beat on the brain

Quite a few years ago, while still in medical school, I scrubbed in on a neurosurgical procedure. Using calibration devices that looked like items stolen from a Victorian science museum, a young Swiss neurosurgery fellow proceeded to cut off the top of the skull and remove a brain tumor from a frail, elderly man.

He was carefully watched by the neurosurgery attending, a fair haired, darting eyed taskmaster whose increasingly biting commentary flowed in perfect Brooklynese.

The procedure did not go well. After about an hour, the attending had had enough. "Look at this brain," he said to the neurosurgery fellow. "Look at this brain. This brain is green."

We all looked at the brain. Its surface possessed a slight, watery green sheen.

"This brain is green. If I told you once, I told you twice — don't beat on the brain."

That remains good advice. The brain needs a lot of fuel, particularly glucose, the only stuff it can use unless starved. Once you're even moderately physically active, your brain gets more blood flow, helpful in clearing out clogged arteries, combating dementia and increasing mental acuity. Your brain also needs rest, enough sleep to learn and remember the previous days' events while preparing to encode the new day's experiences.

Your brain doesn't like to be stressed. Having lots of friends, colleagues and acquaintances to socially support you helps prevent strokes and other vascular "accidents."

You can also help your brain using very simple means. One is to go FAR — remembering those three letters so you can eat Food, be Active and Rest in sequence. Then, like the maids in Boston, you'll quickly figure out what to do. You'll walk rather than drive to the neighborhood drugstore. You'll take your kids for a stroll in a park, turning it into a "green gym." You'll give yourself a little time to calm down before you go to sleep, ritually brushing and flossing your teeth, putting out tomorrow's clothes, reading a few pages from a book you enjoy.

Thinking can be helpful. Like Woody Allen says, it just has to be the right kind.

*Dr. Matthew Edlund practices sleep medicine and psychiatry in Sarasota. His new book, "Designed To Last," is available online. He can be reached at 365-4308 and via his Web site at doctoredlund.com.*

## KEY Classifieds

### CLASSIFIEDS

Order classified ads at  
[www.lbknews.com](http://www.lbknews.com)

Deadline 5 p.m. Tuesdays

We accept all  
major credit cards!

Questions? E-mail:  
[classifieds@lbknews.com](mailto:classifieds@lbknews.com)

### FINANCIAL

**FREE PORTFOLIO REVIEWS** based on technical and fundamental analysis. Send stock and fund list to Saperston Asset Management, Inc., 172 Lake St., Hamburg, NY 14075 or call **1-800-879-7541 ext. 208**. Member: FINRA.

### PETS

**KITTENS/CATS/PUPPIES.** Spayed/neutered, vaccinated, microchipped. Call HONOR SANCTUARY for details. **941-302-0933**.

**FREE KITTENS TO LOVING HOME.** Extremely cute/well behaved. Male and female. Weened/litter trained. Call David **941-706-4256**.

### ITEMS FOR SALE

**COMMERCIAL STEINER MEAT SAW-SLICER** 10" Blade. \$75. **941-809-5909**.

**TALL LOUNGE CHAIR.** Cane sides, beautiful, elegant. \$79. **941-379-4884**.

**CARRYING CASE** for Singer Sewing Machine, new in box. \$15. Call **941-383-3158**.

**DVD/VIDEO-CD PLAYER.** Samsung w/remote control. Like new. \$35. **941-795-8359**.

**FISHING REEL.** Daiwa bg-15 gold/black. \$20. **941-761-1415**.

**FISHING REEL.** Shimano Aero-4000. \$25. **941-761-1415**.

**FISHING COMBO** Daiwa 7' rod + bg-20 reel. Very good cond. \$50. **941-761-1415**.

**IMPORTED ITALIAN** music CDs \$20, and Italian movie DVDs \$25. Contact Pino **248-670-0093**.

**AQUARIUM FILTER.** 10-20 gal Aqua Tech. 1-year-old. \$10. **941-761-1415**.

**FISH SCALE.** Rapala 25lb mechanical w/tape, unused. \$8. **941-761-1415**.

**BIKE RACK.** Outback for SUV, holds two bikes. \$15. **941-761-1415**.

**VHS TAPES (10).** Bible story adventures. \$25. Call **941-383-3158**.

**SUITCASE.** American Tourister, black large roller, never used. \$25. **941-739-3692**.

**GOLF BALLS.** \$2 per dozen. Most like new. **941-721-3162**.

**CHLORINE TABLETS.** 25 lb. bucket, nearly full. \$25. **941-739-5539**.

**POOL FILTERS.** 3 Hayward cartridge C-800. \$30/all. **941-739-5539**.

**MIRROR.** Designer, fancy, filigreed, with gold border and trim. Cost \$199, asking \$45. **941-365-8055**.

**TABLE LAMPS (2).** Ceramic base. \$30. Call **941-383-3158**.

**PAVERS** 16"X16" \$2 each, 9"X18" \$1.50 each. **941-383-7800** or **616-824-5404**.

**SETTEE.** Beige with floral design, tufted. Cost \$350, asking \$75. **941-365-8055**.

**DRAPERIES & VALANCES.** Various sizes, drapes white, \$10/ pair; blue valance, 12-foot long, can be divided. \$40. **941-365-8055**.

### LIMITED FREE CLASSIFIEDS

Longboat Key News is offering free advertising space in our classified section for your items \$99 or less. (Limit of 15 words per ad, three ads per phone number.)

Free ads must be e-mailed to  
[classifieds@lbknews.com](mailto:classifieds@lbknews.com).