

May 2004

PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

Contact:
Diane Allen & Associates
225-925-9788
info@da-advertising.com

Sweet Potatoes and Kids' Nutrition

There are 57 million children under the age of 14 in the United States; 19.5 million of these children are between the ages of five and nine, and one in five is overweight. Pretty scary statistics; but in the last two decades this number has grown by 50 percent.

Adults have steadily grown in size for years, and now the number of obese or overweight children is quickly catching up. An adult's weight has an alarming effect on his or her health. Excess weight will increase the risk for a variety of chronic diseases such as hypertension, type 2 diabetes, stroke and heart disease.

Children don't have the same problems, yet statistics tell us that overweight or obese children have a relatively good chance of growing up to be overweight or obese adults. Childhood obesity is becoming more common for many reasons: genetic factors, lack of physical activity, unhealthy eating patterns, or a combination of the three.

Parents have a responsibility to take their children's weight seriously so their kids do not become overweight and unhealthy adults. One way for parents to impact **unhealthy eating patterns** is to monitor what kids are putting in their mouths.

We live in a world where time is a luxury; parents may be working or constantly running kids to various activities. This lack of time poses a major obstacle for moms who want to give their kids a nutritious diet. But children can have all the recommended foods and servings from the food guide pyramid if moms prepare for each meal and do some planning.

The food guide pyramid recommends three servings of vegetables a day (the highest amount of all groups on the pyramid), and vegetables are the foods moms have the hardest time getting their children to eat. After questioning children ages 7-12, it was found that the number of times vegetables are eaten is closer to three times in one week rather than the recommended three servings a day. This is a serious problem.

A nutritious and tasty vegetable that can help moms solve this dilemma is the sweet potato. There is a misconception that sweet potatoes are just for the holidays, but these veggies are delicious and available all year long. Sweet potatoes can help kids reach the recommended daily servings of vegetables because the sweet potato is so versatile — sweet potato fries for a snack (baked, not fried), mashed or baked sweet potatoes for dinner, and sweet potato pancakes for breakfast. There are hundreds of recipes available for every time of day, and the best part is that kids will never know they are eating something that is good for them.

Why choose the sweet potato over all vegetables to help children get their three servings a day? The sweet potato packs more nutritional value than the rest of its peers. It was ranked number one in nutrition by the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) against every other vegetable.

The reasons the sweet potato took first place? Dietary fiber, naturally occurring sugars, complex carbohydrates, protein, vitamins A and C, iron and calcium. The sweet potato received a score of 184; the vegetable ranked in second place was more than 100 points behind with a score of 83.

The numbers for the nutritional sweet potato speak for themselves: almost twice the recommended daily allowance of vitamin A, 42 percent of the recommendation for vitamin C, four times the RDA for beta carotene, and, when eaten with the skin, sweet potatoes have more fiber than oatmeal. All these benefits with only about 130 to 160 calories!

Among root vegetables, sweet potatoes offer the lowest glycemic index rating. That's because the sweet potato digests slowly, causing a gradual rise in blood sugar so you feel satisfied longer. It's time to move sweet potatoes to the "good" carb list. Many of the most popular diets these days have already.

Sweet Potato Nutritional Aspects and Popular Diets

South Beach Diet

For the nearly 12 million Americans counting carbohydrates as part of the Atkins or South Beach plans, the glycemic index plays a critical part in determining acceptable foods. The index ranks how quickly the body converts carbohydrates into sugar; the lower the glycemic index in a food, the less it will cause weight gain. Sweet potatoes rank significantly lower than white potatoes in the glycemic index, which explains why both carb-counting diets encourage substituting yams for Idaho potatoes. Sweet potatoes are introduced in the later phases of these diets as an acceptable food because they are nutrient-rich.

Atkins Diet

The Atkins Diet recommends introducing 10 grams of carbs in Phase 3 of the diet plan. Sweet potatoes have 10 grams of carbohydrates for every 1/4 cup. Sweet potatoes are on the safe list as a great substitute for other starches such as rice, potatoes and corn.

Sugarbusters Diet

The popular "Sugarbusters" diet that swept the nation is also a strong advocate of including sweet potatoes in a healthy diet. The Sugarbusters diet recommends sweet potatoes as a great substitute for other foods high in sugar and carbohydrates such as rice, pasta and corn.

Sweet potatoes offer parents all they are looking for in a food. Versatility, convenience and a nutritional package that's hard to beat. So the next time you're roving the produce aisle searching for a vegetable your kids will enjoy, grab some sweet potatoes. Your children will never even know they're eating something so healthy!

The Louisiana Sweet Potato Commission would like to help parents promote the appeal of the sweet potato. For children 9 and under, the Commission has created a kid-friendly program at www.sweetpotato.org including a mascot named Yamster the Hamster. The Web site provides games, activities, stories and kid-friendly sweet potato recipes. It's a great way for parents to introduce young children to sweet potatoes, and that could help kids along the path toward healthier eating habits.

Resources:

For additional information, write to the Louisiana Sweet Commission, P.O. Box 2550, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-2550

For information about sweet potatoes and nutrition for children, check out these Web sites:

<http://www.sweetpotato.org>

<http://www.agctr.lsu.edu/agmag/fallover.pdf>

<http://www.nutrition.gov>

<http://www.usda.gov/cnpp/kidspura/news.htm>

<http://www.usda.gov/fnic/etext/000008.html#xtocid238185>

<http://www.5aday.com>

CSPI Nutrition Scoreboard

SWEET POTATO RANKS NUMBER ONE IN NUTRITION

According to nutritionists at the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), the single most important dietary change for most people, including children, would be to replace fatty foods with foods rich in complex carbohydrates, such as sweet potatoes.

CSPI ranked the sweet potato number one in nutrition of all vegetables. With a score of 184, the sweet potato outscored the next highest vegetable by more than 100 points. Points were given for content of dietary fiber, naturally occurring sugars and complex carbohydrates, protein, vitamins A and C, iron and calcium. Points were deducted for fat content (especially saturated fat), sodium, cholesterol, added refined sugars and caffeine. The higher the score, the more nutritious the food.

Sweet potato baked	184
Potato, baked	83
Spinach	76
Kale	55
Mixed Vegetables	52
Broccoli	52
Winter Squash, Baked	44
Brussels Sprouts	37
Cabbage, Raw	34
Green Peas	33
Carrot	30
Okra	30
Corn on the Cob	27
Tomato	27

Green Pepper	26
Cauliflower	25
Artichoke	24
Romaine Lettuce	24

The Center for Science in the Public Interest, Washington D.C. copyright 1992.

Recipes:

Apple Cinnamon Sweet Potato Muffins

- 3/4 cup oat bran
- 3/4 cup whole wheat flour
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1/8 tsp. salt
- 1/2 cup apples, skinless, finely chopped
- 1 cup fresh sweet potatoes (yams), cooked and mashed or
1 (15 oz.) can sweet potatoes, drained and mashed
- 1 large egg
- 2 large egg whites
- 3 tbsp. vegetable oil
- 2/3 cup plain yogurt

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a bowl, combine bran, flour, sugar, cinnamon, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and apples. Add sweet potatoes, egg, egg whites, oil, and yogurt. Stir all ingredients thoroughly. Spray muffin tins with vegetable cooking spray and spoon 1/4 cup of batter per muffin. Bake for 20-25 minutes or until done. Makes approximately 20 muffins.

Per serving: CAL 98 (24% from fat); FAT 3g; PROTEIN 4g; CARB 18g; CHOL 11mg; SODIUM 119mg

Variation: Add 1 cup of raisins.

Baked Sweet Potato Fries

- 4 sweet potatoes (yams)
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- Salt to taste

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Cut sweet potatoes into 1/2-inch thick lengthwise strips and toss with olive oil. Coat a baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray and arrange potatoes on baking sheets. Bake potatoes for 15-20 minutes or until golden brown on bottom. Turn potatoes over and bake about 15-20 minutes or until golden brown all over. Sprinkle with salt and serve. Makes 4-6 servings.

Per serving: CAL 166 (46% from fat); FAT 9g; PROTEIN 1g; CARB 22g; CHOL 0mg; SODIUM 30mg; DIETARY FIBER 3g

For additional recipes, please check out www.sweetpotato.org

Sweet Potato Historical Facts

- Sweet potatoes were grown in Peru as early as 750 BC.
- Native Americans were growing sweet potatoes when Columbus arrived in 1492.
- George Washington grew sweet potatoes on his farm at Mount Vernon, Virginia.
- George Washington Carver worked extensively with the sweet potato. He developed 118 different products from sweet potatoes, including a mucilage for postal stamps, an economic method for sizing cotton fabrics, dehydrated food and an alternative to corn syrup. Also, in 1896, Carver was appointed head of the Agricultural Department at the Tuskegee Institute where he showed the value of soil regeneration by planting sweet potatoes as the rotation crop for cotton. Carver demonstrated successfully that a diet of peanuts and sweet potatoes could achieve nutrition economically.
- In 1918, during WWI, when the supplies of wheat flour were falling behind, the USDA utilized sweet potato flour to stretch wheat flour in all baked goods.
- African slaves in the South called the sweet potato “nyami” because it reminded them of the starchy, edible tuber of that name that grew in their homeland. The Senegalese word “nyami” was eventually shortened to the word “yam.”
- “Yam” also refers to sweet potatoes that are grown in Louisiana. When the orange-fleshed, Puerto Rican variety of sweet potatoes was adopted by Louisiana producers and shippers, they were called “yams” to distinguish them from the white-fleshed sweet potatoes grown in other parts of the country. The yam reference became the trademark for Louisiana-grown sweet potatoes.

Sweet Potato Tips

- Sweet potatoes are stored in temperature- and humidity- controlled warehouses that extend the sweet potatoes’ shelf life for the entire

year. Therefore, the “season” for fresh sweet potatoes is 12 months. Canned sweet potatoes are also available year ‘round.

- Sweet potatoes should not be refrigerated unless cooked. Store between 55 and 65 degrees F.
- Always use a stainless steel knife when cutting a sweet potato. Using a carbon blade will cause it to darken.
- When selecting fresh sweet potatoes, choose those that are smooth, plump, dry and clean.