

Nutrition News And Notes

Experts Are Praising The Benefits Of Pasta

(NAPSA)—There's good news for those who are passionate about pasta. Researchers and dietitians say this much-loved food is good for you—and with good reason:

- Pasta is a low-glycemic-index (GI) food. This means it does not cause sugar in the blood to rise quickly, so consumers receive the benefits of prolonged carbohydrate absorption. As a matter of fact, pasta has a lower GI than wheat bread and oatmeal.

- Pasta meals are efficient delivery systems for healthy foods. Pasta should not be eaten alone but with partners such as vegetables, fish, olive oil, tomato sauce, legumes and lean cuts of poultry and meat. Pasta meals provide a wide variety of essential nutrients such as fiber, protein and vitamins.

- Pasta does not promote weight gain when eaten in the proper portions and healthy combinations.

Pasta meals are also central to the Mediterranean diet, which is characterized by an abundant variety of fruits, vegetables, breads, pasta, whole grains, potatoes, beans, nuts and seeds, olive oil as the principal source of fat, and low to moderate consumption of fish, poultry and dairy products. The "New England Journal of Medicine" recently reported that the Mediterranean diet reduces the risk of death from heart disease and cancer.



Pasta meals can be tasty and efficient "delivery systems" for a variety of healthy foods.

To learn more about the health benefits of pasta and find more healthy recipes, visit www.ilovepasta.org.

Here's a pasta recipe that includes the appropriate proportion of carbohydrate, protein and fat to be considered a healthy pasta meal.

PENNE WITH CHICKEN AND BROCCOLI

Serves 8

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
½ large onion, chopped
8 cups raw broccoli florets
1 lb. skinless chicken breast, cut into 1-inch cubes
16 oz. penne

2 tablespoons Romano cheese, grated
black pepper to taste
½ teaspoon salt

Bring a large pot of water to a rolling boil over high heat.

In the meantime, take medium-size saucepan and heat olive oil over medium heat. Sauté garlic and onions until translucent, careful not to brown. Add chicken pieces and thoroughly cook. When chicken is cooked, remove from heat and set aside.

In the large boiling pot, add broccoli and cook until firm yet tender. Using a slotted spoon or skimmer, remove broccoli and add to the saucepan with garlic, onion and chicken. Cook broccoli until it is completely broken down yet still green.

Return the large pot of salted water to a boil and add penne—cook according to package directions. When pasta's ready, reserve 1 cup of pasta water and add to broccoli mixture. Drain penne and toss into the broccoli mixture. Add grated cheese and mix.

Serve immediately on individual dishes and top with fresh ground pepper to taste. Approximately 2 cups per serving.