

# Stokes County Cooperative Extension Newsletter

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## Food Wars: Can we believe scientists or bloggers?

Debbie Cox, County Extension Director  
Family & Consumer Sciences

Before our next newsletter, the 2015 Dietary Guidelines will come out. Already the food wars are heating up with online journalists and food bloggers weighing in on the age old question – can we trust the science of growing food for our bodies and provide increased food for the world population? Or should we all grow and eat organic food only?

The Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee 2015 is mandated by congress to provide direction to U.S. Health and Human Services and the US Department of Agriculture. Specifically, they were to review the 2010 guidelines and determine what the new research tells us about our food and eating habits and suggest new guidelines to help us improve our diet. Now if we stop right there, common sense will tell you that we have all heard that 25% of U.S. adults are obese and we need to change our eating habits.

A journalist by the name of Nina Teicholz recently published an article in the British Journal of Medicine to outline her viewpoints and conclusions about the 2015 Dietary Guidelines. Journalists must get to preview these documents before the U.S. public sees them. However, many of her accusations were suggesting the committee used “weak science”, consisting of people on the committee with vested interest in the food supply. She totally disagrees with the committee’s recommendations on saturated fat, red meat, salt, added sugars and carbohydrates.

The Dietary Guidelines Committee spent 20 months reviewing scientific reports on nutrition and physical activity. They also held open comment periods, public meetings and hearings. The members of this committee are academic researchers, physicians, and government officials in aforementioned agencies. They take reports from U.S. National Institutes of Health, Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences, research from science groups and government reports of eating patterns in the U.S. and around the world. They are very well educated people who read thousands of articles and documents researching the large group studies and studies that provide consistent results with our best science.

We know that Americans are still only eating two and a half servings of fruits and vegetables a day. We also know that farmers are seeking new ways to grow food with less pesticides, insecticides and greater sustainable practices. What the general public needs to know is that science is not the enemy of our food supply (our expectations of being able to make fresh strawberry pie in February or always expect the lowest price on tomatoes is a small part of the issue as well). It does not need to be that we throw out all scientific knowledge about what our bodies need to remain healthy and active. We have to become better educated consumers of our food, food systems and science behind our agricultural industry. There are many parts to our food supply, not just growing and eating food. The system has evolved over time to grow, harvest, process and get to stores in time to keep up with demand. From the sixties onward convenience foods, fast food restaurants, and ethnic foods have been introduced. All of these systems were set up to take care of the increase in population after World War II, the women engaged in the workforce in the seventies. They sought more convenience items to help with the dual workload. The current population seeks food that is not genetically modified, has the fewest possible pesticide use and is grown “clean” (their term for no pesticides and chemical free soil, but all soil contains contaminants and pests and is not clean, thus another confusing term). Today more sustainable agriculture operations are trying to meet this new demand.

The growing of food is done on family farms that consider the best way to grow food and make a living to support their families. Our decisions are to consume the food which sustains our bodies, can be purchased within our budgetary constraints and affords us energy to work and play. So as the new guidelines come out remember that guidance about what to eat should not be complicated and that many intelligent people have taken steps to insure you know what is best for your health. The topic gets complicated when others want to throw out suspicion, forward their own agendas onto others and cast doubts on the farming practices, food companies (some deserved) and our food supply. We will soon have to feed nine billion people by 2050 – that many hungry people will stretch our growing abilities. There is room for many more great minds and research to find ways to grow more food, more efficiently, improve nutrition implanted into existing food (i.e. folate in bread) and sustain a larger population. We need less time casting stones at each other and more time creating opportunities to grown more food and build a stronger agricultural economy.

Let’s keep the conversation going about what to eat. The new ideas may already be germinating in young minds. A website exists to continue the dialogue at [feedthediologuenc.com](http://feedthediologuenc.com). Let’s allow science and citizens to continue to discuss what we eat, but first make sure we commit to our health by following guidelines intended to instruct and inform.

# Being Outside Can Improve Physical and Mental Health in Youth

Matthew Barber  
Extension Agent  
4-H & Youth Development

“Time in nature is not leisure time; it’s an essential investment in our children’s health (and also, by the way, in our own).”

Richard Louv

Today’s youth may be the first generation at risk of having a shorter lifespan than their parents. In the past decade, an increase in sedentary indoor lifestyles in children is contributing to conditions such as obesity, asthma, attention deficit disorder, and diabetes. To help prevent these problems we must get creative in finding new ways to guide children into becoming healthy, more active and physically fit. Several studies have found convincing evidence that outdoor activity, unstructured play and being in nature does not only help improve a young person’s physical health, but also their mental health.

A sustainable, long-term prevention method that promotes an overall lifestyle change is the use of nature and outdoor activity for children. The challenge is parting these young people from their televisions and other electronics long enough to give them a meaningful outdoor experience that they will want to return to. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, the average child spends roughly seven and a half hours a day consuming some form of electronic media. Children are simply not getting outdoor experiences anymore and that change in lifestyle is promoting physical inactivity. This lack of physical activity is having a negative effect on the overall health of many young people.

Parents’ encouragement and participation can play a major role in the amount of time children spend outdoors. Roughly forty percent of adults in the United States report no participation in any leisure time physical activity. This leads to a much higher chance of obesity and parental obesity more than doubles the risk of a child becoming an obese adult. The prevalence of obesity has doubled over the last thirty years for preschoolers and adolescents, and more than tripled for children age six to eleven. It is shown that up to eighty percent of these obese youth will grow up to become obese adults, and will be more likely to deal with issues such as cancer, hypertension and arthritis.

Very few youth in the United States reach the recommended minimum of sixty minutes of moderate to vigorous activity daily. But some studies have found that for every additional hour spent outdoors, physical activity increased by twenty-seven minutes a week and the chance of becoming overweight dropped from forty-one percent to twenty-seven percent. The odds of achieving that sixty minute mark of activity is three times greater for those who spend time outdoors!

Since the 1970’s, children have lost roughly twelve hours a week of free time, including a twenty-five percent decrease in play and a fifty percent decrease in unstructured outdoor activity. Many studies directly relate the amount of time spent outdoors to the amount of physical activity a child gets. Exposure to nature can have profound benefits for those who take advantage of it. More of an effort needs to be made to help young people get back outside. It will improve both their physical and mental health, and guide them into becoming healthier adults!



# Here They Come Again- Are You Ready?

Randy Fulk - Horticulture Agent

As the weather begins its welcome cool down many of us have already noticed an occasional, uninvited interloper crawling on the wrong side of our windows, doors, and a few almost unbelievable places- how did they get in there? (!)

Yes, unfortunately it is time for the Brown Marmorated Stink Bug to begin seeking out places to over winter and yes, unfortunately one of their preferred locales is inside our homes.



Native to Asia where, by the way, there are also a number of predator insects that keep Stink Bug populations in check, Brown Marmorated Stink Bugs arrived in Pennsylvania 1998, possibly as stowaways in a shipping container. Shortly thereafter, having found the cold, snowy northeastern winters disagreeable, they began their long migration southward. They arrived in Maryland in 2002, Virginia the next year, and to the Tar Heel State in 2009. The first North Carolina sighting of Brown Marmorated Stink Bug was in Forsyth County. With no natural enemies Stink Bug populations have rapidly increased.

While they are beginning to significantly impact many agricultural crops, the EPA lists their pest status for homeowners as nuisance. And what a nuisance they can be.

Controlling these critters is difficult at best and while there are effective sprays to employ, most homeowners lack the equipment and protective gear to apply them. Exclusion is still the best way to approach the problem. Here are a few of the most common entry points to check-

- Door sweeps- the door sweep is the plastic strip that attaches to the bottom of the door and provides a seal keeping out cold winter winds and, if it's in good shape- Brown Marmorated Stink Bugs. If you can see light or feel air coming underneath the door sweep it is time to replace it.
- Window frames- Over time as a house settles a once tight fitting window can develop air gaps around the frame. These are easy entry points for Stink Bugs. If you feel air coming in around the window frame, use a caulking gun to go around the window sealing up any air gaps that have developed.
- Dryer vents- Use caulk to seal around the dryer vent pipe. Over time these can become so loose that they are barely attached.
- Eaves of the roof- Again, caulk is your ally here. House settling can open up gaps between the side walls of the home and the roof. It only takes the tiniest of gaps for Stink Bugs to slip through.
- The chimney- If the home has a fireplace make sure the chimney has a cap or fine mesh screen on it.

Other options-

Pesticides- While not recommended for homeowners there are any number of materials out there labeled for Stink Bugs. Bifenthrin and cyfluthrin are labeled for stink bug control. Bear in mind applying these materials, especially when spraying above your head to reach areas such as the eaves of the roof, is extremely dangerous as the pesticide will drift back down on you. Exterminators can release any number of insect bombs or foggers inside the home which, while controlling stink bugs already inside do nothing to keep more from entering. This is why exclusion is the best policy. Seal all your entry points before even considering applying pesticides.

The vacuum cleaner- Stink Bugs can be vacuumed up, however they will release their defensive- and quite offensive- stink into your vacuum cleaner which will persist for some time.

If you find yourself losing the battle- Take comfort in the knowledge that while these persistent creatures are quite an annoyance, they do not sting or bite, nor do they transmit any known diseases.

They do however, DRIVE US CRAZY!



Photo credit- Rutgers University New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (2015)

Sources-

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