

WVBOLD UPDATES

The West Virginia Board of Licensed Dietitians (WVBOLD) is asking for nominations for the Lay Person position. Nominations will be sent to the Governor's Office by WVAND and are contingent upon his approval.

Qualifications and responsibilities:

All members of the WVBOLD must be a US citizen and a West Virginia resident. The lay person member cannot be a registered or licensed dietitian and must not be subject to the practice regulations of the Board. The Board would prefer a nominee that is familiar with financial spreadsheets. Special preference will be given to a person with an accounting background but a CPA is not required.

Please send nominations to Linda St. Clair at lsstclai@gmail.com or 304-444-7642.

FEED HER POTENTIAL

**Dairy foods help support healthy brains,
bones and bodies throughout the life span.**

**SEE THE SCIENCE AT
DRINK-MILK.COM**



Cindy Gay's advice after 50 years in the dietetic association:

My first recollected food assignment as a young college student was to provide an afternoon snack for a nursery school class. I gave the preschoolers ready to eat crackers and cheese. That was more than 50 years ago. There was not as many ready to eat packaged foods. The meats, vegetables and fruit were likely not processed. For the grain option, menu planners opted for a slice of bread, 4-6 crackers, 1/2 cup cooked rice, pasta or cooked cereal or 1 cup ready to eat cereal.



Fast forward 55 years when the 2026 Dietary Guidelines to Eat Real Food seemed to invoke a reluctance among colleagues. My advice after 50 years in the dietetic association:

- Don't let highly processed foods be the default option. If you can't make it in your own kitchen it probably falls into that category. Americans have to eat less of them, not eliminate. Give alternatives.
- Diversify plant foods. Plant foods include grains, fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds. These add prebiotic fibers and polyphenol nutrients supporting a healthy gut. Diversifying these and trying different varieties is good for a healthy gut as well as the environment.
- Include sources of lean meat and dairy to meet the protein needs of older adults.
- Emphasize fermented probiotic rich foods.
- Wash and cut vegetables and fruits yourself. Safety, nutrient density and taste is better.
- Make it harder for manufacturers to engineer a ready to eat food meeting nutrition standards.

What snack would I give to the preschoolers today? Do made from scratch mini muffins (pumpkin sorghum) and a fresh banana sound good?

THE CAFFEINE GAP IN NUTRITION COUNSELING

By Anel Guerrero , BS, Dietetic Intern

A 17-year-old high school student, Larissa Rodriguez, died from a heart condition linked to excessive caffeine consumption. Since then, her family has filed a wrongful death lawsuit against an energy drink company. Similar lawsuits have linked highly caffeinated beverages to wrongful deaths, such as in the case of 21-year-old UPenn student, Sarah Katz, who died after consuming a lemonade with almost 400 mg of caffeine. Many of these cases involve underlying risk factors like heart conditions, intake of multiple stimulants, or the combination of alcohol and caffeine. However, underlying conditions alone do not fully explain the risks associated with high caffeine intake. These unfortunate events highlight how easily it is to exceed safe intake without realizing it.

CAFFEINE ASSESSMENT

Caffeine intake is rarely a focus in nutrition assessment. At times, it may appear as a line on an intake form or a quick routine question. When answering, patients may not always be aware of how much caffeine they are really consuming. Energy drinks, tea, soda, pre-workouts, supplements, cacao products, and functional beverages are common ways that caffeine can add up without being recognized. Even when we ask about caffeine, we rely on patients identifying these hidden sources for an accurate estimate.

DOSES AND PATTERNS

Even when patients can identify caffeine sources, we must also consider the amount consumed and the frequency. Large bolus doses can affect the body differently than consuming caffeine gradually over 30 minutes to an hour. A recent trend called “dry scooping” involves consuming one scoop of pre-workout without mixing it with water. This can provide as much as 300 mg of caffeine in a very short time. In comparison, a typical 12 oz energy drink may provide 100 to 200 mg of caffeine consumed over a longer period, which slows absorption. However, it is often difficult to determine how much caffeine is in a typical energy drink, or if there is even such a thing as a standard energy drink.

LABELING AND PERCEPTION ARE MISLEADING

Manufacturers often use buzzwords to make caffeinated products more appealing. Terms like “natural energy,” “plant-based,” or “endurance” are perceived as safe and may encourage greater consumption. The FDA does not require caffeine content to be listed on the nutrition label. When caffeine is added to a product, it is only required to appear in the ingredient list. This makes it more difficult for consumers to understand how much caffeine they are consuming throughout the day.

AT-RISK POPULATIONS

Individuals with cardiac conditions, even if undiagnosed, are at increased risk of complications from high caffeine intake. Adolescents and young adults are also at risk despite generally being considered healthy. This group is more likely to combine caffeine and alcohol, which can have negative effects on multiple body systems. Patients with anxiety or sleep disorders may also experience more pronounced side effects.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

We often recommend that patients limit caffeine intake to no more than 400 mg per day but translating this into real-world examples can help patients better understand their intake. More importantly, caffeine use should be explored in context, as it often reflects underlying issues such as fatigue, inadequate intake, or poor sleep. Incorporating caffeine into routine nutrition assessment, education, and documentation can help RDs and other healthcare professionals better identify and address potential risks.

Caffeine is one of the most consumed psychoactive substances in the world, yet it remains one of the least discussed in nutrition practice. These cases do not suggest that caffeine is inherently dangerous, but they highlight a gap in awareness that healthcare professionals should address. As new products continue to emerge with higher doses and different forms, dietitians have an opportunity to expand screening, education, and counseling around caffeine. In doing so, patients can make more informed decisions and potentially reduce the risk of adverse outcomes.

About the author:

Anel Guerrero is a second-year graduate student at WVU completing her master's degree in Nutritional and Food Sciences. Upon graduation, she plans to become a Registered Dietitian and is interested in chronic diseases, global health, and working with rural populations abroad. Her academic and hands-on experiences have shaped a strong passion for working with diverse communities where she hopes to continue learning about health, culture, and the foods that bring them together.





WEST VIRGINIA ACADEMY OF NUTRITION AND DIETETICS

NEWSLETTER & MEMBER UPDATES

INTERVIEW WITH LEIGHANN SCOTT, RDN

By India Grubbs, BS, Dietetic Intern

What nutrition challenges do most college students struggle with, and which ones do you think students don't realize are affecting them?

Leighann explains that most students who request her services show disordered eating habits and an overall lack of dietary balance. This does not necessarily indicate an eating disorder, but it does suggest that better alignment of nutrition with individual needs and lifestyle choices would be beneficial. She notes that some students do not eat enough to support their energy demands, while others consume excessive portions of certain foods, which can lead to blood sugar spikes, gut issues, or persistent hunger. When the diet is lacking, these patterns can create imbalances in the body that often appear as fatigue, food cravings, gut issues, depression, and anxiety.

How do you help students manage their eating habits when they are dealing with stress, lack of sleep, or mental health challenges?

She focuses on the individual and their unique style of living, food preferences, personality, and views of the world. While this seems broad, it gives her a good understanding of how each student navigates life and how it impacts their overall health. She notes that some students may have hereditary concerns, while others experience low or high appetite when stressed and under or overeat as a result. Some may experience gut issues or none at all, but outwardly express stress in less obvious ways that are best understood through conversation.



WEST VIRGINIA ACADEMY OF NUTRITION AND DIETETICS

NEWSLETTER & MEMBER UPDATES

How do you support students who have food allergies, cultural differences, or experience food insecurity?

She explains that if a student has a dining plan, she first acclimates them to the allergy-safe options in the dining hall. At WVU, she notes the recent transition to a new food vendor that employs a Wellness Dietitian who supports students with food allergies, and she often refers students there. If students do not have a dining plan, have food intolerances rather than a true allergy, have cultural differences, or experience food insecurity, she asks for about an hour of their time to understand them as a person. Because everyone is unique and WVU students come from all over the world, she emphasizes that one size does not fit all when it comes to application. She believes it is most advantageous to get to know the student before making recommendations to ensure they are truly helpful. She also notes that some students may be struggling financially, being away from family, lacking support, or having minimal nutrition education, so learning about them allows her to provide the most benefit. She adds that she starts small with changes or suggestions when needed and refers students to other professionals if additional support is required.

What nutrition-related changes do you find make the biggest difference in students' overall health?

She emphasizes that nutrition is not and will never be perfect, and that the body can and should tolerate most foods unless there is an allergy or other medical condition. She explains that the body is both smart and complex and requires a variety of foods to stay healthy. When healthy, the body can metabolize and detox properly, helping protect against disease and dysfunction and allowing people to enjoy food and life. She adds that she focuses on teaching the foundations of nutrition so that when life-disrupting circumstances arise, individuals are equipped with the knowledge to manage their diet and nutrition.