

# WELL CHURCH & COMMUNITY CONFERENCE 2022

## HEALTHY EATING Q&A SESSION

Answered by: Dr. Jenna Anding, PhD and Jayla Fry, MS

### Healthy Eating

Does Aspartame have a negative impact on our health? Example: Coke Zero, Diet Sodas

Not really, that's kind of the downside question. There are some artificial sweeteners, the more technical term is non-nutritive sweeteners, that may have some side effects for some individuals. For some people who are sensitive to these, it may give them headaches or gastrointestinal distress. Aspartame is a combination of two different amino acids. There are individuals with a condition called PKU or Phenylketonuria that shouldn't consume products with that artificial sweetener. For the general population, they are safe. Now having said that let me throw this in there, *'a little bit is fine, but too much is not'* and if we are having to eat foods like sugar-sweetened beverages, cakes, and candies that have artificial sweeteners. Maybe we just need to cut out the cakes, coke, and cookies and eat a little bit of the good stuff.

What is the opinion of Keto vs. Low Carb?

The low carb diet has been around for years. Ketogenic diets have also been around for years, and they are used very often in our pediatric populations that have seizure disorders. And we're not quite sure why.

For those who aren't familiar with a ketogenic diet it's one that is extremely low in carbohydrates, sometimes as little as 20%, and even lower carbohydrates. The rest of the diet is coming from protein and fat.

For the general population, there's been some mixed research about the efficacy of low-carb diets. Definitely, if you were to give up pasta, pizza, and bread, odds are you are going to lose some weight. I would also argue that it wasn't the pasta, pizza, and bread that made us gain weight, but it probably came about because of how much we were putting onto it. I would encourage, rather than a low carb or keto diet, to focus on the types of carbohydrates we're eating, and on vegetables and fruits. Vegetables kind of have low carb in of themselves, except for beans and legumes. Additionally, looking to consume whole fruits, not fruit juice, and whole grains as opposed to ultra-processed.

### Gardening

Could you elaborate how to keep others motivated with a community garden?

First of all, recognizing people's efforts goes a long way, the pat on the backs, the verbal thank you's, stuff like that really makes a difference. Another thing to do is highlight in your community the successes of the garden. This can include showing how many people are benefitting from the garden, taking pictures, inviting the public to just come see the gardens, and what is going on.

Additionally, always recognize your volunteers, so other than the pats on the back. Many of our Master Gardener's Program have a more formal award system, so, you may be able to implement within your community garden "the gardener of the year!" or whatever that recognition is. Additionally, maybe having a way for them to be able to enjoy the produce or take home some produce. A little of a gift back to them may be a motivating factor. So, these are just a few ideas of course you can be creative with that. Communicating, keeping people in the loop of what's going on and a part of the process can also help because no one wants to feel left out. So that's just a few things that'll keep people engaged and motivated.

### Do you have garden youth programs or programs specifically for youth?

We're blessed that the International Junior Master Gardener Program was developed right here in Texas. There are so many wonderful resources to develop gardens with kids. You can go back to your county extension office for resources. One of the curriculum pieces I wanted to point out is there "Learn, Grow, Eat & Go!" (LGEG). This was part of a five-million-dollar grant that they developed with the nutrition department, and they studied these 3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> graders over two years. They did body mass index and implemented not only the gardening aspect, but the exercise aspect, and several lifestyles that have a steady production of benefits. The LGEG curriculum is laid out step by step and made simple for you! I definitely encourage you to check out that website on the LGEG curriculum. They just released an early childhood program that's in the LGEG program, so some additional wonderful resources there.