

“Examining Nutrition Trends & How These Impact Your Work in Healthcare”

Webinar Questions Answered by Liz Shaw, MD, RD, CPT

Please note that these are brief answers to complex questions and are not meant as medical advice. Please seek medical advice from your personal healthcare professional for more complete information.

- Can you expand on the health benefits of MSG? What are the negatives of using it? Can you share any references/resources specifically related to MSG?

Monosodium glutamate (MSG) received a bad rap back in 1968 when a letter to the editor was published discussing one person’s account of experiencing symptoms after eating at a Chinese restaurant. Over time, this ingredient made headlines from poor research that injected animals with unfathomable amounts of this ingredient (i.e., something no person would eat in a typical meal!) [Research](#) has since evolved and has shown that not only is MSG safe to consume and cook with, it can lower the salt and sodium content of meals when used in recipes.

MSG has been used around the world for more than a century to enhance and balance the taste of food. MSG is the purest form of umami – the fifth taste that gives food a savory, meaty flavor. Its main component, glutamate, occurs naturally in foods like tomatoes, mushrooms, and cheese.

MSG is deemed safe by the [FDA](#), the [Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#) and the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#); [European Commission](#); and [Food Standards Australia and New Zealand](#).

MSG is often mislabeled as a cause of headaches and migraines based on anecdotal reports. Based on the body of evidence, the [International Headache Society](#) removed MSG from its list of causative factors for headaches in 2018.

A report from the [Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology \(FASEB\)](#) in the 1990s found that headaches could only be produced in some sensitive individuals who consumed a bolus of 3 grams or more of MSG without food. A typical serving of a food with added MSG contains less than 0.5 grams of MSG, so consuming more than 3 grams of MSG without food at one time would be highly unlikely. It would be like eating a spoonful of table salt.

Contrary to popular belief, MSG is not an allergen. According to Food Allergy Research and Education’s (FARE) [educational resource, “Food Additives and Allergies/Intolerances”](#), while some people identify themselves as sensitive to MSG, in studies where such individuals are given MSG or a placebo, scientists have not been able to consistently trigger reactions.

MSG can help reduce sodium without compromising taste – especially with healthier foods. Ajinomoto recently worked with [UC Davis on a study](#) where participants evaluated four different “better-for-you” recipes (roasted vegetables, quinoa bowl, savory yogurt dip, and pork cauliflower fried rice) in which sodium was reduced by 31 to 61% through the addition of MSG. Participants described the dishes as “flavorful,” “delicious,” and “balanced.” Not only does MSG help reduce the salt in a dish, but it can even make better-for-you foods like fruits and vegetables taste better – ultimately making it likelier that consumers will choose to eat them.

- Where can one buy ube? What kind of store would carry it?

Ube is from the Philippines, so I'd first start with a local Filipino market if you have one near you! But you may also find it at other ethnic grocery stores. Try a Ranch 99 Market, H Mart, or other like store in your area.

- What is the TLC diet?

Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes diet

Source for more information: <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/education/TLC-Therapeutic-Lifestyle-Changes-Lower-Cholesterol#:~:text=The%20TLC%20diet%20recommends%20limiting,lean%20meats%20are%20good%20options.>

- What are your thoughts on functional medicine/nutrition trends?

This field is growing and many dietitians I know are becoming certified as functional nutritionist as well, especially those who work in hormone health. I would advise to be aware of the trends emerging but also rely on the science. Just as you would with any other nutrition trend evolving, see what the longitudinal research is (if any) and if it's applicable to your line of work. I think it's important to remember that not every client/patient is looking for this, so trust your gut and follow your own philosophy because there are different strokes for different folks!

- What were those research companies that were mentioned earlier that complete the trend reports?

Mintel, Datassentials, New Nutrition Business, Technomics
Also noted in the reference slides.

- How far behind do professional organizations (ADA, AND, etc.) tend to lag compared with the social media trends?

It's hard to put a definitive answer on this because there is no data that accurately measures this currently available. What I will say is that as nutrition evolves and social media takes a more prominent role in where consumers get their information, organizations like the Academy need to lean on their younger members to get the information and stay abreast in evolving social media trends so we don't fall so far behind.

- Do the current trends influence consumers' awareness of obesity prevalence - any data?

First off, I think it's important to address the trend on inclusive language (thankfully!) We are in a new era when it comes to the understanding of someone living in a larger body versus identifying someone as "obese" ([World Obesity Federation](#).) I've been to at least 3 conferences in the last 4 years that have brought up this point when discussing the statistics surrounding obesity and those individuals who are living with obesity, and how a "person first language" needs to be weaved into how HCPs and the general public discuss this condition.

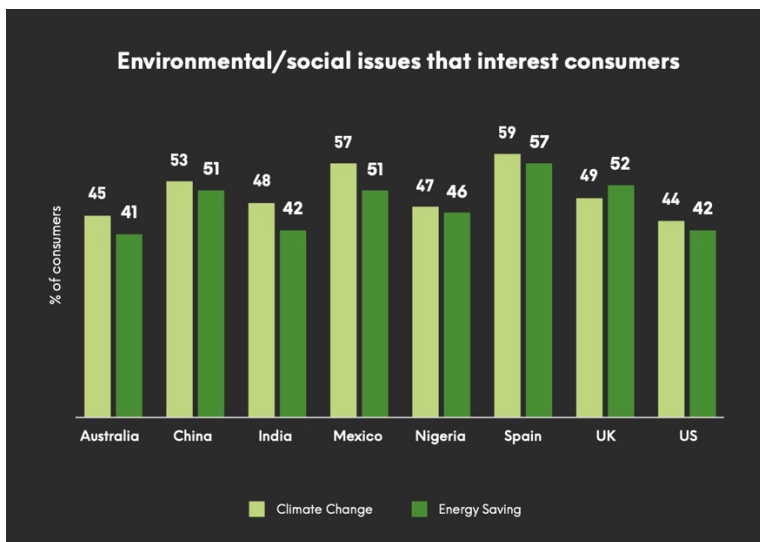
As far as the prevalence of obesity and the nutrition and health trends emerging in the US, I believe the eating patterns listed (Med, DASH, TLC, Flexitarian, and MIND) offer insight in how to tackle the epidemic without

specifically leaning into weight loss or diet mentality. This, as the intuitive research shows, is likely to move the needle more on instilling healthy, lifelong habits that a short term weight loss fix.

- Are there also trends in cultural foods that used to not be viewed as "healthy" such as Mexican, African, or Asian cuisines with the increase in popularity in intuitive eating? Are there trends with other global communities which are having an impact: India, Caribbean, Africa, Filipinos?

Absolutely, as you can see from the PPT slides and if you look a bit deeper into the Mintel and Datassentials reports (available if you put your email in the websites listed on the references), the embracement of cultural foods of all kinds (many including animal based proteins unique to the culture, like goat) are continuing to remain at the forefront of menu innovation. I do believe in the US specifically this is going to continue to remain strong as younger generations embrace a more inclusive mindset and engage in more worldly eating experiences.

The data from the Mintel report shows that other global communities are embracing some of the trend concepts at the US when it comes to sustainability and reducing our carbon footprint. Here's a snapshot of the data:



I highly encourage you to download the report and read through it yourself here:
<https://www.mintel.com/consumer-market-news/global-consumer-trends/>

- I'm an adolescent eating disorder dietitian in an inpatient/res level of care and see a lot of kids struggling with marketing terms. Curious if you think brands will trend away from using moralizing language, especially with intuitive eating not going anywhere?

While I would absolutely love to see this, I don't think food marketing and its use (or misuse) is going away anytime soon, unfortunately. However, I do think with each new generation that has buying power there interest is growing more on the sustainability front and less on the weight loss front and perhaps in a few decades we'll see some vast improvements compared to where we are now.

- Do you have any knowledge or thoughts, the pros/cons /benefits on the consumption of sea moss?

Since sea moss is a type of seaweed, this review provides some interesting insights into its benefits:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8232781/>

On the flipside, as with everything we consume, not all products are created equally. Depending on where and how it's grown, it may contain heavy metals in larger than ideal quantities. Plus, sea moss is high in iodine which can pose a problem for certain individuals.

See more at Cleveland Clinic article here: <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/sea-moss-benefits/>

- Do you have any practical ways to keep up with all the nutrition/health trends? What resources do you find you use most to fact check new trends?

It's impossible to stay abreast on all the trends since there are both macro and micro trends constantly evolving! However, I would say stay relevant in our niche on those trends by signing up for the appropriate journals and organizations that affect your clientele directly. For instance, when I worked specifically in reproductive health, I was a member of the ASRM (American Society for Reproductive Medicine) and subscribed the weekly journals that shared reports and new research findings.

For social trends and things affecting pop culture, your Apple News Feed is likely to give you good data to be honest on the latest FoodTok trending as well as other large media outlets like Today, Good Morning America, VeryWell, etc. As always, take these with a grain of salt on validity until you do your own homework!

For general, macro-trends, I find monitoring these websites and signing up for their newsletters to be beneficial:

Aforementioned Annual Trends Reports from Big Firms

Institute for the Advancement of Food and Nutrition Sciences: <https://iafns.org/>

Food Insight – IFIC : <https://foodinsight.org/>

Kerry Health and Nutrition Institute: <https://khni.kerry.com>

- Are you seeing any trends addressing further health safety concerns of food packaging...EU vs US?

From the EU perspective, unfortunately not. I am consistently noticing actually how vastly different their standards are from the US when it comes to food safety and how things are presented and held in restaurants and the stores.

- Do you find that other countries hold on to more traditional diets or follow trendy diets longer than the U.S.? Also, do you see that health professionals play a more influential role in diets in other countries?

Not necessarily. While I can only speak to what I'm currently seeing and have seen in the EU market, I find the US is still more engaged in trendy diets and spends more money on functional food products and their innovation. While the EU market has an emerging "plant based" market while having pockets of "high protein" and a few "low carb" products here and there, the predominant trend continues to be organic. It's interesting though, as I still find the embracement of carbohydrates and deli meats nearly at every restaurant and social gathering.

As far as HCPs, in the Czech Republic specifically, there are very few RDNs practicing, and those who do are in a clinical setting. While there are a few large RDN influencers or “nutritionist” in the EU, the communication legalities are much different out here and from the conversations I have had prevents people from sharing information on health in a public way. Plus, in countries like Germany you can get arrested (from what I’ve been told) for taking photos or videos in public if other people are in the area because they own the right to their own image.

- Are you seeing any slowing or increasing of the organic foods trend? How about the ‘farmers’ market direct to consumer trends?

Alongside the sustainability trend, I do think the organic food trend/supporting local continues to remain at the forefront of people’s minds. However, with the rising costs of food and number of families struggling to put food on the table, it’s hard to say if the desire for organic/sustainable foods is more prominent or the necessity to simply have food to feed one’s family. This is where we as HCPs need to be mindful of how we talk about foods (i.e., refraining from disparaging against any one food because quite frankly that may be all a family can afford at the moment.) While it’s important to know your audience, it’s also our responsibility to keep an open mind and understand everyone’s personal situations are unique.

- An old trend(s) that’s re-trending, such as tinned fish’s long shelf life, lack of refrigeration, and recyclable packaging make for a more climate-friendly protein than many other meats?

I’m not sure specifically the question being asked here, but I absolutely agree there is a large number of individuals who see the benefit of increasing their seafood consumption from reputable sources to increase their intakes of DHA/EPA as more research comes out about their cognitive health benefits. With that said, the price point for many products like this may be out of the question with rising food costs and the financial struggles many Americans are facing today.