Technology Trends for 2018

I’ve been reflecting on the technology of this past year, contemplating what 2018 will bring. Technology innovations have impacted families for generations, but the difference today is the speed at which they are adopted. Here are two tech trends from Fortune’s article Technology Trends that will Transform Our World in 2018.

1. **Blockchain.** It is an underlying technology for cryptocurrency bitcoin. It can make “internet of things” devices such as Amazon’s Alexa even more useful. It creates a digital record across hundreds or thousands of computers, vastly reducing the risk of hacking. Combining “internet of things” with blockchain ushers in a whole host of new services and businesses. It can be used to track shipments of pharmaceuticals, create smart cities in which connected heating systems better control energy use and connected traffic lights efficiently manage rush hour.

2. **Virtual reality and/or augmented reality.** Augmented reality (AR) blurs the line between what’s real and what’s computer-generated by enhancing what we see, hear, feel and smell. Thanks to the introduction of affordable augmented reality glasses, our phones will remain in our pockets and Heads Up Displays (HUD) will improve how we work, shop, and play. Imagine walking down the street in a foreign country and having signs instantly translated into English thanks to your trendy sunglasses. AR will customize in-store experiences with mannequins that match your body type and display enough virtual inventory to rival any online site. Virtual pop-up stores can be built to appear anywhere that crowds are gathered (in a stadium, a busy street corner, or even inside a subway). These non-brick and mortar retail locations will bring new opportunities for merchants to create engaging shopping experiences anywhere with accessible bandwidth.

Although the examples shared in the Fortune article are consumer-based, I see the potential from an educational platform. How about a virtual reality tour of the digestive system detailing how probiotics aid in digestion? Or maybe a “bot” that cautions you against purchasing a new pair of shoes that aren’t in your household budget. I am excited to see what 2018 will bring!

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Jackie Amende  ❖  Canyon  
Surine Greenway  ❖  Owyhee  
Bridget Morrisroe-Aman  ❖  Ada  
Joey Peutz  ❖  Payette  
Christiane Williamson  ❖  Ada

County Extension Offices

Ada.................................287-5900  
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Extending Knowledge ● Changing Lives
Do You Have Metabolic Syndrome?

Excess belly fat is a telltale sign for metabolic syndrome.

Various groups of experts have come up with ways to define metabolic syndrome. They include the American Heart Association, the International Diabetes Federation, and the World Health Organization. But having three or more of the following risk factors means you have metabolic disorder:

- **Large Waistline.** This means belly fat that produces an “apple-shaped” midsection, also called central or abdominal obesity. Most of the fat tissue is around the organs in your abdomen, and is called visceral abdominal fat. A useful rule of thumb for abdominal obesity is a waistline of 40 inches or greater in men and 35 inches or greater in women. Among Asian people, the excess internal fat may not produce the same apple-shaped pattern seen in Caucasians.

- **High Fasting Triglycerides.** Triglycerides are a type of fat found in the blood. A triglyceride level of 150 milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL) or higher, after an overnight fast, is a risk factor. So is having to take medication to lower triglycerides. *(The unit mg/dL is used to measure triglycerides, cholesterol, and blood sugar.)*

- **Low HDL Cholesterol.** HDL cholesterol is sometimes called “good” cholesterol because it helps promote artery health. An HDL of less than 50 mg/dL for women and less than 40 mg/dL for men is a risk factor for metabolic syndrome. Having to take medication for low HDL cholesterol is also a risk factor.

- **Elevated Blood Pressure.** A blood pressure of 135/85 millimeters of mercury (mmHg) or higher, or being on medicine to treat high blood pressure, is a risk factor for metabolic syndrome. If only one of your two blood pressure numbers are high, you’re still at risk.

- **High Fasting Blood Sugar.** As cells start having trouble taking up blood sugar (glucose), levels start to rise. Normal blood glucose after an overnight fast should be less than 100 mg/dL. A fasting blood sugar (glucose) of 100 mg/dL or higher, or being on medicine to treat high blood sugar, is a risk factor for metabolic syndrome. A level between 100–125 mg/dL is considered prediabetes, and 126 mg/dL or higher is diabetes.

Source: *Tufts Health & Nutrition Newsletter, December 2017*

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**Because You Asked:**

**Q. I eat fish every day: salmon on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday--and tuna the other days. Is this healthy or should I cut back?**

**A.** The 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that adults eat 8 ounces or more of seafood per week. That means two (or more) 4-ounce servings, *(each roughly the size of a deck of cards).* Choose a variety of kinds, with an emphasis on fatty fish like salmon, herring, and sardines.

Eating fish daily raises a concern about health risks associated with trace amounts of mercury found in seafood. In general, mercury toxicity is not a concern for people who eat modest amounts of fish *(1 to 2 servings per week).*

If you eat fish more than five times per week, avoid those species highest in mercury. Large and long-living fish tend to have the highest levels: king mackerel, marlin, orange roughy, shark, swordfish, tilefish, and Albacore tuna *(including solid or chunk white canned tuna).* The best fish choices are salmon *(farmed or wild),* herring, anchovies, sardines, trout, and Atlantic & Pacific mackerel.

**Source:** adapted from *Tufts Health & Nutrition Newsletter, December 2017*

**Q: If there is a crack in the shell of an egg, is it still OK to use?**

**A:** Bacteria associated with food-borne illness *(food poisoning),* including Salmonella, can enter eggs through cracks in the shells. Eggs with large cracks in the shells are more likely to contain Salmonella compared to eggs without cracks or only hairline cracks. Check eggs before purchasing to avoid buying those with obviously-cracked shells.

If eggs crack while transporting them home from the store, the USDA advises breaking any cracked eggs into a clean container. Tightly cover the container and refrigerate it, using the eggs within two days. If eggs crack during hard boiling, they are still safe to consume.

Note that even non-cracked eggs may be contaminated with Salmonella. The USDA says the number of eggs affected is quite small but cautions us to always handle eggs safely. Buy only refrigerated eggs, put eggs in the refrigerator as soon as you get home and cook eggs thoroughly until both the white and yolk are firm. For more info on egg safety, visit *fsis.usda.gov* and search “shell eggs from farm to table.”

**Source:** adapted from *Tufts Health & Nutrition Newsletter, November 2017*
Do We Really Need to Eat Breakfast?

You have probably heard that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. In part, this is because some research suggests that eating a daily breakfast may help you to maintain a healthy weight or, if you are overweight, lose some pounds and keep them off. The research is not definitive on the question of breakfast and weight control, but breakfast has another important potential benefit.

“Breakfast is an important meal because it sets you up for the rest of the day,” says Alice H. Lichtenstein, director of Tuft’s HNRCA Cardiovascular Nutrition Laboratory. “That does not mean the first meal of the day needs to be what we traditionally think of as breakfast. However, it does appear that people who regularly consume breakfast have a better dietary pattern throughout the day and may avoid overconsuming calories later in the day.”

In scientific circles, the formal definition of breakfast varies. But the word helps to define itself: at breakfast, you break your overnight fast. The first meal of the day is typically consumed within a few hours of waking. Studies have found hints of various benefits of regularly consuming breakfast. They include a healthier body weight and diet quality in adults, and better attention to school work in children.

Weight: Most of the studies that suggest eating breakfast daily helps maintain a healthy body weight are observational in nature: they compare weight loss or gain in people who skip breakfast and people who don’t. In many studies, the skippers are more likely to be overweight. But this doesn’t mean that breakfast-skipping “causes” weight gain. Indeed, the experts who reviewed all studies on this topic for the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans concluded that the evidence was lacking to determine whether skipping breakfast leads to weight gain.

One reason for the uncertainty is that observational studies can’t conclusively rule out other possible reasons why eating a daily breakfast is associated with a healthier weight. For example, breakfast eaters may exercise more regularly or eat a better diet in general.

Diet Quality: Breakfast contributes to diet quality by supplying a variety of essential nutrients. According to the Dietary Guidelines, breakfast in the United States typically consists of 20% of the day’s calories but includes a higher percentage of key nutrients such as fiber, folate, vitamin D, calcium, iron, and potassium than either lunch or dinner. Besides helping to provide the basic nutrients you need every day, a good breakfast can also be part of an overall healthy eating pattern, which helps to prevent chronic diseases and supports a healthy weight. According to the Dietary Guidelines, a healthy dietary pattern is:

- higher in vegetables, fruits, and whole grains
- includes low- or non-fat dairy, nuts, seafood, and legumes
- moderate in alcohol (among adults)
- lower in red and processed meats
- low in sugar-sweetened foods and drinks and refined grains.

Breaking Your Fast: There is not one perfect breakfast. Whatever you choose, remember the big picture—it matters what you eat throughout the day. Some people eat when they get up in the morning and some wait. Some people eat a traditional three meals a day, some people graze. Adding breakfast to poor dietary choices is not going to help and may only lead to weight gain.

What’s a Healthy Breakfast? There are many breakfast options with generous amounts of nutrients per calorie—a measure called nutrient density. Here are a few healthy choices.

- Eggs. Scramble an egg or two with tomatoes, spinach, mushrooms, or other vegetables, cooked with canola, soybean, or olive oil.
- Yogurt. Top a portion of plain yogurt with unsalted nuts and fruit, such as sunflower seeds, sliced bananas, or berries.
- Cereal. Instead of yogurt, top a high-fiber breakfast cereal or unsweetened granola (containing at least 8 grams of fiber per 40 grams of carbohydrate) with nuts and fruit.

And don’t forget those dinner leftovers tucked into your fridge. Cooked meats and vegetables from the night before can also be incorporated into a healthy breakfast.

Source: Tufts Health & Nutrition Newsletter, December 2017
Which Cutting Boards are Best?

“Wood, plastic, and stone cutting boards all have their advantages and their drawbacks,” says Ben Chapman, an associate professor and food safety extension specialist at North Carolina State University. For example, plastic boards are easier to sanitize because you can put them in the dishwasher. But over time, your knife cuts grooves where bacteria can hide. Wood is tougher to sanitize but doesn’t scratch as much...if it’s a hardwood. “Hard woods like maple are fine-grained, and the capillary action of those grains pulls down fluid, trapping the bacteria, which are killed off as the board dries after cleaning,” says Chapman. Bamboo is dense, durable, and resistant to water, so it’s also a good choice. Soft woods like cypress pose a greater risk because their larger grains allow the wood to split apart more easily, forming grooves where bacteria can thrive.”

Chapman suggests plastic for meat, fish, and poultry and wood for fruit, vegetables, bread, and cheese. But either can work. “As long as you wash your boards with soap and water and dry them, it doesn’t matter which you use,” he says. Drying is key. A wet board can be a breeding ground for pathogens. Another danger zone: washed, pre-bagged salad greens that you wash again. “Re-washing bagged salad is not a good idea,” Chapman says. “you are more likely to contaminate the lettuce with bugs from your kitchen than you are to make the greens any safer to eat.”

Greens with Cannellini Beans & Pancetta

**INGREDIENTS**
- 2 slices pancetta or bacon, chopped
- 1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 small red onion, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 bunch kale, roughly chopped
- 1 bunch beet greens or spinach, roughly chopped
- salt to taste
- 1 (15 ounce) can cannellini beans, drained

**DIRECTIONS**
1. Microwave the chopped pancetta or bacon on high for 3 minutes. Drain the drippings, and set the crispy pancetta aside.
2. In a large frying pan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Cook onion in oil until soft. Add the crushed garlic cloves and cook a minute more. Stir in chopped greens and season with salt to taste (be conservative at this point—you can always add more!). Partially cover the pan and cook until the greens begin to wilt. Stir in crispy pancetta and cannellini beans. Cook partially covered for 5 more minutes, until the flavors have blended, and the greens are tender.

Source: *Nutrition Action Health Letter, December 2017*

Source: *Allrecipes by Diana Moutsopoulos*