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The Impact of Visuals on Nutrition and Health Education Materials

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Colorado State University Extension (CSUE) recently launched a new website, Live Eat Play Colorado (LEP; www.liveeatplay.colostate.edu) which promotes traditional CSUE fact sheets as well as new consumer-friendly materials with dense imagery and lower reading levels. LEP has allowed for an increased use of visuals to enrich nutrition and health materials. Appealing visuals serve as tools designed to increase comprehension and memory of health topics (Frisch, Camerini, & Schultz, 2013). Information retention is higher when visuals are combined with text, as opposed to text-only information (Peregrin, 2010). Testing this idea, visuals were placed in the text-only fact sheet, “Nutrition for the Athlete” (231,424 page views in 2014). Google Analytics data revealed that read time increased 23% in the 15 months after visuals were placed compared to the 15 months prior, from an average of 5:32 to 6:50 minutes. The increased read time could suggest that readers are more engaged with information on the webpage and demonstrates the potential positive impact of visuals on web-based education materials. Educators should intentionally select images for fact sheets that will support, reinforce, and/or clarify messages on health topics.

References

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