

# X-ray backbones stiffen nutritional resolve

It took a well-defined backbone in an X-ray print, but a lot of students at Livonia's Bentley High School are be-

ginning to believe that good eating pays off. The students in a nutrition class

taught this year by Pat Arent all kept company for six weeks with several sets of white rats fed varying diets.

They watched as rats fed a ground-up diet of soft drinks, hamburgers, French fries and ice cream showed a

little less growth and a little less glossiness of coat and brightness of eye than those that consumed skim milk and fruit and salad with their hamburgers. But the difference wasn't striking, and the need to change the diet didn't seem to strike many students. They thought maybe they might consider less junk food. But then again...

bones in good shape."

Ms. Arent said she was surprised that the rats didn't show more outward differences. Then she added that she and her students were impressed with the X-ray contrast.

"Those pictures made a good teaching tool," she said. "Not only the students but a lot of others around Bentley came in to look and were struck by the difference."

LIVONIAN Irene Cameron, who works with the National Dairy Council and suggested the experiment because she remembered a similar one when she was a home economics student in college, decided to take the rat research a step further.

She and the rats headed for St. Mary Hospital, where Norbert Radzilewski took X-ray pictures of them.

Those pictures told a stronger story. The rats that ate properly had well defined bone structures, each rib and vertebrae sharply outlined. The one with a calcium deficiency had a backbone hard to trace.

"We know calcium deficiency affects the bones," said Mrs. Cameron, who recommended that the students try to get a glass of skim milk into their diet each day. "That amount would take care of calcium needs and keep the

MS. ARENT gave her class a test on the rat project and finished it off by asking if participation had changed the students' personal eating habits.

"I feel that I will watch more of what I eat and will not eat as much junk," responded one class member. "You hear about these things, but here it actually took place."

Another stated she would start watching her diet, because she had learned "how you grow when you eat good and bad food." A third promised to "start eating more fruits and vegetables."

And the teacher convinced herself. "It really showed me the need for calcium in the diet," Ms. Arent said. "I've been drinking my glass of skim milk every day."



X-rays tell the story of how food can affect bone structure. The rat at the left received a well-balanced diet including calcium, and his bones show up well defined. At the right, on the rat that went the soft drink



and French fries route, decalcification is beginning and the bones are not well defined.

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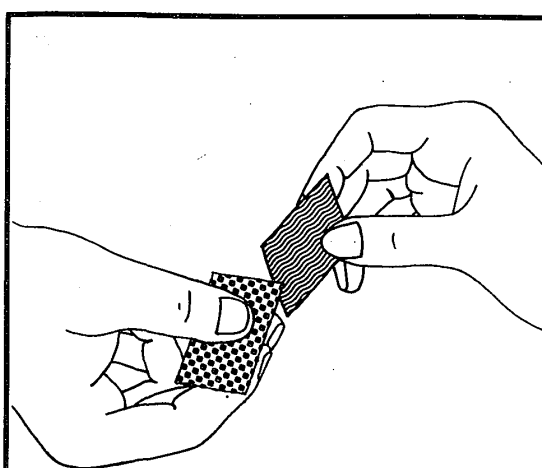
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