

## USDA, Microsoft To Launch 'Innovation Challenge' To Address Food Resiliency

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is partnering with Microsoft to launch the "Innovation Challenge," a contest designed to explore how climate change will impact the United States' food system with the intent of achieving better food resiliency. The challenge invites entrants to develop and publish new applications and tools that can analyze multiple sources of information about the nation's food supply, including key USDA data sets that are now hosted on Microsoft Azure, Microsoft's cloud-computing platform.

"For more than 100 years, USDA has compiled data from economic reports and farm production surveys, and more recently from satellite imagery and remote sensors that can provide information on the health of crops around the country," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "Through this partnership with Microsoft, we are now putting that data into the hands of people who can help us derive new insights to address factors that threaten our ability to feed a growing global population. This offers very exciting possibilities, and I look forward to seeing the new tools that contest participants develop."

For the first time, key USDA datasets are being made available in the cloud where they can be accessed and blended with other data to give novel insights or used in new types of end-user applications. Combining these USDA data with cloud-computing resources allows even very high fidelity and complex models to be processed in a timely manner and enables results to be delivered to remote users on their laptops, tablets or mobile phones.

The challenge offers \$60,000 in prizes, including a top prize of \$25,000, for applications that make use of the USDA data and provide actionable insights to farmers, agriculture businesses, scientists or consumers. In addition, Microsoft is granting cloud-computing awards to aid university researchers and students who wish to take part in the challenge.

The deadline for entries is Nov. 20, 2015, giving challenge participants three months to create their applications. Winners will be announced in December 2015.

The increased prevalence and availability of data from satellite imagery, remote sensors, surveys and economic reports mean that we can analyze, model and predict an extremely diverse set of properties associated with our food production. Applications might combine data from the USDA and other government sources, such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) or the United States Geological Survey, and can be targeted at farmers, scientists, food producers, insurance companies or consumers.

"I am looking forward to discover what creative ideas the community comes up with through blending together USDA data, novel ways of exploring and analyzing data with access to large scale computing and data analysis in the form of Microsoft's Azure platform," said Dr. Daron Green, Deputy Managing Director of Microsoft Research. "Microsoft and the USDA seek to catalyze the creativity of others and hope that the challenge will provide a great incentive for developers and researchers interested in data science to put together some great applications helping address the USA's food resiliency needs."

Microsoft will promote the challenge at the 2015 meeting of the Agricultural & Applied Economics Association. Full details can be found at <http://usdaapps.challengepost.com>.

The Innovation Challenge was created in support of the President's Climate Data Initiative, which aims to harness climate data in ways that will increase the resilience of America's food system. This is a direct response to the President's call for all hands on deck to generate further innovation to help prepare America's communities and business for the impacts of climate change.

## 2016 Hopefuls Hit The Gym On Campaign Trail

BY CATHERINE LUCEY  
 Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — Scott Walker is counting steps on his FitBit. Jeb Bush swears by the Paleo diet. Bobby Jindal is a "gym rat."

With long travel days and a fresh slab of cherry pie never far away, the campaign trail is notoriously unhealthy. But many 2016 presidential candidates are striving to make smart lifestyle choices as they tour the small town diners and pizza places of the early voting states.

"I try to do at least 10,000 steps a day," said Walker, the Wisconsin governor.

He said he got the step-counting wristband for Christmas and competes with his family and staff to see who moves the most in a day. He added, "The FitBit's got me obsessed."

Walker isn't the only candidate trying to get exercise on the road. Florida Sen. Marco Rubio does an early morning workout in hotel gyms. Texas Sen. Ted Cruz also wears a FitBit and likes to take phone calls while walking. Former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum does at least 50 pushups a day and former executive Carly Fiorina works out on the elliptical most mornings, aides said.

Former Texas Gov. Rick Perry, who had back surgery in 2011, said late last year that he has a workout routine that focuses on core strength. Asked about his back, he said: "It's good. I quit running and I quit wearing cowboy boots ... I do a lot of pull-ups, pushups, planks, crunches, and I ride a stationary bike."

Diet is important to many 2016 hopefuls, too. Bush has slimmed down using the Paleo diet, heavy on lean meats and vegetables and low on carbohydrates and dairy.

The former Florida governor has been known to toss the roll off his plate to stick to the rules. He cheats from time to time, though. In the spring he was caught on camera digging into blueberry pie in New Hampshire.

These efforts help with health and stamina. But the candidates also want to look good on camera and along the rope line in a selfie-ready world. President Barack Obama showed a disciplined approach to health and fitness during his campaigns, rising for pre-dawn workouts. First lady Michelle Obama is also a fitness devotee whose "Let's Move" campaign strives to reduce childhood obesity.

Hillary Rodham Clinton tries to avoid pizza, work out regularly and do yoga from time to time, said spokesman Nick Merrill. And former Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley said working out regularly and opting for vegetables over fast food helps with the stresses of the trail.

"You can't get sick when you're in this sort of job," O'Malley said. "So like an athlete, your body becomes your tool."

Politicians who struggle with weight must do so in public. Two years ago, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie had surgery on his stomach to make it smaller. He hasn't revealed how much weight he's shed, but he has slimmed down considerably and gets complimented frequently by potential voters.

While the surgery means Christie's diet is selective, he has taken time to indulge on the trail. At an Italian-American Heritage Festival in Des Moines, Iowa, Christie partook in a bacon-wrapped date, but passed other food he was offered to an aide.

"Oh no, no," he reportedly said before indulging, according to *The New York Times*. "Iowa wraps everything in bacon!"

Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee has been more vocal about his health. Huckabee dropped 100 pounds through diet and exercise about 12 years ago and documented his success in his book "Quit Digging Your Grave with a Knife and Fork." In the past few years his weight has crept back up; he says he's lost some again, though he is not as light as when he was running marathons.

## Oz And Roizen

# Life ... Without A Gout

BY MICHAEL ROIZEN, M.D., AND MEHMET OZ, M.D.  
 King Features Syndicate, Inc.

When the cartoon character Courage the Cowardly Dog's owner Eustace Bagge is taken over by Big Toe, a menacing microbe that talks like Edward G. Robinson in "Little Caesar," you know that swollen, purple digit is up to no good. (Trust us on this one.)

The same could be said for the ever-increasing menace of swollen digits that often signal a gout attack. Overall prevalence of gout in North American has jumped two- to four-fold in the past 40 years. Around 8.3 million folks have the condition, and as more people are diagnosed with metabolic syndrome (three or more of these five conditions: high triglycerides, a large waist size, low healthy HDL cholesterol, high blood sugar and high blood pressure) the number of cases will skyrocket. One study showed that 63 percent of folks with gout also had metabolic syndrome; while only around 25 percent of folks without gout had it.

Although it's a form of arthritis, gout is also associated with an increased risk of hypertension and cardiovascular disease. Eating high-purine foods such as red meats and shellfish, being overweight and drinking too much can contribute to developing gout and triggering attacks.

You can help prevent gout by keeping blood pressure and blood lipid levels in check; avoiding most saturated and all trans fats, processed carbs, added sugars and syrups; walking 10,000 steps a day (1 minute of aerobic activity equals 100 steps); and de-stressing with 10 minutes of mindful meditation daily. Toe the line, and Big Toe will be nowhere around!

### TIME FOR AN OIL CHANGE?

The Houston Oilers left Texas for Nashville in 1996 with the hope that becoming the Tennessee Titans would help improve their record of 16 losing seasons in 34 years. At first it looked like a promising move. They headed to Super Bowl XXXIV in 2000. But last year they had only two wins with 14 losses. Clearly, they're still in need of an oil change! And so are many of YOU.

Your intake of "Oilers" — that is, salad and cooking oils — has gone from around 10 pounds per person annually in the 1950s to 35 pounds today. Highly processed oils and those invented in the 20th century are best avoided. That, says Dr. Mike's Cleveland Clinic Wellness Center, means you should steer clear of inflammatory oils such as corn oil, shortening made with hydrogenated palm oil and soybean oil. Solid fats like margarine also increase inflammation.

Instead, opt for cold-pressed or expeller-pressed oils; they've been extracted without use of a chemical solvent. For high-heat cooking, choose polyunsaturated fats like grapeseed or avocado oil. For all other purposes, opt for monounsaturated oils like olive, almond, peanut, safflower, sesame and canola oil.

Polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats helped lower lousy LDL cholesterol and help prevent some cancers and stroke. And omega-3, in the form



**OZ AND ROIZEN**

Dr. Mehmet Oz and Dr. Michael Roizen

of alpha-linolenic acid (ALA) in canola and walnut oil, reduces plaque buildup in the arteries and keeps blood sugar levels in check.

Bonus tip: Algal and fish oils have DHA-omega-3s, which reduce brain, eye and joint inflammation.

### WALK THIS WAY

When John Cleese paced across the floor in Monty Python's "Department of Silly Walks," there was no end to the ways he could think of to perambulate. But when it comes to getting in your 10,000 steps a day — an essential building block of your good health — there really is a right way to put one foot in front of the other, and a whole lot of wrong ways. And making those missteps can discourage you from getting the physical activity you need. So here's a step-by-step guide to walking wise:

1. Don't overextend your stride. It may seem like fun, but stretching your stride puts pressure on your shins, throws off your balance and risks injury. Better way: Keep your head level (don't bounce up and down) and your body centered. Push off your back leg for power.

2. Roll through your step. Make each step a rolling motion from heel to toe; avoid flat-footed strides. Good equipment: You'll need well-cushioned, well-heeled, flexible-soled shoes that bend at the ball of the foot.

3. Let your arms help you. Bend arms 45 to 90 degrees and let them swing naturally with each step. Beware: No flapping chicken wings!

4. Chin up; look ahead about 10-20 feet. You'll be able to clearly see your path while maintaining good posture — so important for proper breathing and muscle tone. Engage your core, too, so you support yourself using your pelvic and stomach muscles.

Now grab your step counter and a walking buddy. You're hitting your stride!

### ARE YOU MISSING A CHANCE TO SAVE YOUR LIFE?

In 1736, Ben Franklin famously said, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." He was talking to his fellow Philadelphians about that city's extreme threat of fire. (He established the Union Fire Company to put out fires if prevention failed!)

A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's weekly report recently sounded the alarm that around 30 percent of folks who already have had a heart attack or stroke or who

experience angina are not opting for the prevention that a pennies-a-day dose of aspirin can provide. They pointed out how 75-162 mg a day (far less than an ounce) can prevent recurring cardio problems. That's worth a lot of pounds (and dollars) that you might otherwise have to spend on a cure — if you're lucky enough to survive another round of heart problems.

For folks with stable ischemic heart disease, aspirin use can cut the risk of another stroke or heart attack by 37 percent, the need for angioplasty by 53 percent and the risk for unstable angina by 46 percent. (We each take 162 mg daily with half a glass of warm water before and after to ease potential gastro problems.)

Added bonus: Aspirin also helps reduce the risk of at least nine different cancers. And a 2011 meta-study of eight randomized clinical studies found that daily aspirin reduced the overall risk of dying from cancer by 20 percent. The largest benefit was in avoiding gastrointestinal cancers, particularly colorectal cancer. Breast, lung and prostate cancer risks also were significantly reduced. Aspirin may be your ounce of prevention.

### ARE YOU A NUTRITIONAL ALL-STAR?

Outfielder Mike Henry Jordan played for the Pittsburgh Alleghenys baseball team in the 1890s and he's still on the list of players with the lowest batting averages ever! In his 125 times at bat he managed to connect with the baseball only about once every 10 times. That same sorry stat applies to most Americans' nutritional plate appearances: A new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study says that only 1 in 10 of you is eating the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables. That means most of you are missing out on produce's ability to protect you from a roster of diseases, including some cancers, diabetes and heart disease.

To become a nutritional all-star, you need between five (the minimum recommended) and nine servings of fruits and veggies daily. As a minimum, you should aim for three servings of fruit a day (a banana, an apple and an orange). But only 13 percent of you eat even 1 1/2 to 2 cups of fruit daily! And you need a minimum of 4 cups of veggies daily (2 cups of greens, plus 1 cup each of broccoli and asparagus) to get on base. But only 9 percent of you have 2 to 3 cups a day.

To boost your nutritional batting average, try buying pre-bagged salad mixes and frozen vegetables and fruits. Get in the habit of snacking on fresh fruit once a day. And puree veggies to add to all sauces and soups you make, or even those from a can. Then you'll have a chance to get on base with the healthy team.

*Mehmet Oz, M.D. is host of "The Dr. Oz Show," and Mike Roizen, M.D. is Chief Wellness Officer and Chair of Wellness Institute at Cleveland Clinic. To live your healthiest, tune into "The Dr. Oz Show" or visit [www.sharecare.com](http://www.sharecare.com).*

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## Avera Announces Donation To Support Mobile Food Pantry

Avera Health announces the donation of \$75,000 to Feeding South Dakota to reach out to communities through its Mobile Food Pantry.

Avera will donate \$25,000 per year over three years. Avera has supported Feeding South Dakota for 10 years, most recently through a \$35,000 donation to support expansion and relocation of food pantries in Pierre and Sioux Falls.

The Mobile Food Pantry grant will help ensure that people in the communities of Huron, Ipswich, Miller, Lower Brule and Reliance can continue to be served with free food for people in need.

The Mobile Food Pantry, the newest program of Feeding South Dakota, began operation in January 2013. Timely deliveries allow for the distribution of fruit, vegetables, dairy products

and baked goods as well as non-perishable food.

"Through the help of 350 partnerships, Feeding South Dakota reaches all 66 counties of our state. Yet a significant 'hunger gap' still exists, especially in the underserved, rural areas of the state. In fact, one in eight of all South Dakota households are considered 'food insecure,'" said Kerri DeGraff, Development Director for Feeding South Dakota. "We invite other businesses, organizations and individuals to join Avera in supporting this vital outreach."

A lack of nutrition leads to greater susceptibility of disease and chronic conditions. A lack of energy leads to lower performance on the job or in school. Hunger, especially in children, has been shown to weaken cognitive function, impair social interaction and cause declines in

alertness and class participation. The effects of ongoing hunger and lack of nutrition can last a lifetime.

"We are grateful for Avera's donation to help us continue reaching several communities and counties in our state. Thanks to these needed funds, families will be supplied with nutritious food, rather than turning to lower-cost foods that are often high in fat and sugar, and low in protein and nutrients," said Pat Mahon, President of the Feeding South Dakota Board.

"Avera is honored and privileged to participate in the ministry of feeding the hungry," said John T. Porter, President and CEO of Avera Health. "Nutritious food is simply basic to health and well-being, and so the efforts of Feeding South Dakota are a very close fit to the Avera mission of making a positive impact in the lives of persons and communities through quality services that are guided by Christian values."

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