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Smart Choices for YOUNG FAMILIES

January

A Newsletter from the EFNEP/SCNEP Programs of Virginia Cooperative Extension



Welcome to the January Issue of **Smart Choices for YOUNG FAMILIES**. You may be a little down after the holidays, especially since January tends to be cold and dreary. Also, you may be stressed over gaining weight or overspending during the holidays. Well, don't despair. There is a better way to look at January – it is also a time to begin anew. This issue gives all kinds of tips on getting your weight and your budget back on the right track. One good thing is that your life may be less hectic after the holidays. This allows more time for physical activity and preparing healthy meals.



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Nutrition and Health Tips for Today

Control your weight with smaller portion sizes. Are you upset because you gained weight over the past year or holiday? Are you worried that your children are getting too fat? Perhaps the problem is not *what* you eat, but *how much*. Portion sizes in restaurants and at home are far larger than most people need. This can add lots of calories and body fat.

Steps to cut down on portion size:

1. Learn your healthy calorie level and the amounts of five food groups by going to <http://www.MyPyramid.gov>. If you do not have access to the Internet, contact the Program Assistant listed on the back of this newsletter. She/he can mail you a copy of *MyPyramid* that fits your calorie needs.
2. Note the amounts of the 5 food groups (grains, vegetables, fruits, meat, and milk) that you need to lose weight or stop gaining.
3. Learn to judge serving sizes by measuring food a few times at home. The size of a deck of cards can be used to judge a 3-ounce serving of meat.
4. In restaurants, order the half order and avoid super-size choices, especially of high-fat foods. Another way is to ask for a takeout box and take half the food home.

5. At the beginning of a meal, eat a salad with little or no dressing. Also, choose low-calorie vegetables to fill up.
6. Break the “clean plate” habit. Don’t teach children they must clean their plate. Instead, stop eating as soon as you feel comfortably full.
7. Eat slowly and chew well so you will be satisfied before overeating.
8. At home, put the servings on the plates in the kitchen. Large bowls of food on the table encourage overeating.



Staying Healthy for a Lifetime

Losing Weight – Facts, Fallacies, and Best Advice: There are many views on the best way to lose weight. There is also a lot of bad advice given in magazines and weight-loss books. Here are two common “dieting” fallacies with the facts and best advice.

Fallacy 1: High-fat, low-carb diets (Atkins, South Beach, etc.) are great ways to lose weight because eating more fat keeps away hunger and carbohydrates (carbs) make you gain weight.

Facts: It is not the added fat that staves off hunger. Instead, it is the high protein level in the meats they recommend. The high-fat foods in these diets greatly increase the risk for heart disease, cancer, and gallbladder disease. They also are low in vegetables, fruits, and grains that are essential for good health.

Best Advice: When trying to lose weight, eat one high-protein, low-fat food at every meal to stave off hunger. Examples are:

- baked, grilled, or broiled chicken, turkey, or fish
- lean beef or pork
- tuna, salmon, or chicken canned in water

- fat-free or low-fat cottage cheese or yogurt
- fat-free or 1% milk

Fallacy 2: You need to cut carbs to a low level to lose weight because they are fattening and make you hungry.

Facts: Your body needs carbohydrates to function properly. Carbohydrates include **refined carbs** (sugars, syrups, white flour, cornstarch, etc.) and **complex carbs** (natural starches and fiber). Foods high in refined carbs often are high in fat and calories, which cause weight gain. Examples of such foods: sodas, other sweet drinks, cakes, cookies, candies, pies, and other desserts. Foods high in **complex carbs and low in fat are healthy**. Most people need more complex-carb foods – not fewer. Examples: fruits, vegetables, whole-grain breads and cereals, and dried beans and peas.

Best Advice: Eat meals and snacks made up of the recommended amounts of these foods: lean meats and beans (5 ounces), low-fat milk/yogurt (3 cups), vegetables (2 cups), fruits (1-1/2 cups), and whole grain foods (5 ounces). This pattern contains about 1,600 calories. Most adults will lose weight on it – if they get 45 minutes of physical activity on 5 days per week.

Staying Fit and Having Fun



Make a commitment to be physically active. Is your only physical activity using the TV remote control and going to the refrigerator? If so, it is time for a change! January is here and it is time to commit to a more active YOU! Why start now? It is a new year. The sooner you start the faster you will feel better and become healthier.

Consider these great reasons for committing to an active lifestyle:

- It helps to maintain and/or control weight.
- It gives you more energy.
- It helps you sleep better.
- It reduces your chances of getting diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and other diseases.
- It helps you to look your best.

If you fall victim to the excuse “I don’t have time to exercise,” consider this: regular physical activity may actually save you time and money. Active people are healthier. They do not have to spend as much time and money on doctor’s visits and medicines as inactive people. Physical activity builds strength and stamina, making you more efficient at doing household tasks.

Physical activity can be fun and relaxing. You just need to choose an activity you enjoy and that fits your lifestyle. Some ideas are walking or playing outside games with family and friends. Make this a permanent lifestyle change, not just a temporary New Year’s resolution. The most important step is to make a commitment and get started today!



Children’s Corner

Getting Children to Try New Foods: It is important to teach children to enjoy a variety of foods. This means eating a rainbow of colors. Each color of fruits and vegetables gives different nutrients, ensuring that children will grow normally and resist illness. Here are some tips on doing this:

- Offer a new food at the beginning of the meal. Kids are more willing to taste new foods when they are hungry.
- Go for at least “one bite” – but do not force your child to eat. Keep the experience positive.
- You and family members need to try new foods, setting a good example. Kids copy what they see and hear. If you do not like a food, your child probably will not either.
- Try and try again – even if your child is not interested. Kids need to be exposed to a new food up to 10 times before they will like it.

- Relax! If you have tried offering a food and your child does not like it, that is okay. Your child does not need to like every food.

The important thing is for parents to encourage children to eat a variety of foods. Also, begin early to offer whole-grain foods. Keep raw vegetables and fruits (washed and cut up) in the refrigerator for handy snacks. In addition, encourage physical activity. Children eat better when they are active.

Body Image and Teens: Many young people yearn to look like the thin models and movie stars they see on TV or in movies and magazines. Many of these stars, especially females, have low body weights that are unrealistic and unhealthy for most teens. This may lead to teens developing a negative body image and poor self-concept. Parents and other role models can counteract this by assuring youth they have positive characteristics and can be attractive at any body weight and shape. (Adapted from Nibbles for Health, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA)

Saving Money at the Grocery Store

Eating healthy on a budget. Eating healthy foods does not mean paying a lot more or eating unappealing foods. Healthy foods can taste good and may reduce your food budget. Healthy eating may also reduce your medical bills.

10 tips to help you and your family have a healthier New Year on a tight budget:

1. Plan meals and snacks ahead of time and make a grocery list.
2. Check grocery store ads. Include foods in menus that are a good buy for that week.
3. At the store, stick to your grocery list and do not buy on impulse. However, substitute lower-cost foods that have similar nutrition value.
4. Determine whether or not a food special is really a good buy. To do this, keep a list of usual prices of frequently used foods and compare prices.
5. Purchase extra supplies of non-perishable, frequently used foods that are on special.
6. Limit the amount of perishable foods you buy to the amount that can be used by the “sell-by” or “use-by” date. This date can be found on the package.
7. Limit your purchases of prepared or convenience foods, such as those in the deli. They usually cost a lot more.
8. If you have a choice of grocery stores in your area, consider travel cost. Travel cost may be higher than the money saved if the store is far from your home.
9. Buy fresh fruits and vegetables only when they are in season and at lowest cost. Otherwise, buy canned or frozen versions. Foods that are usually good buys in January are apples, oranges, grapefruits, white potatoes, sweet potatoes, cabbage, and nuts.
10. When available, buy store brands of foods. They usually taste just as good as national brands and are lower in cost.



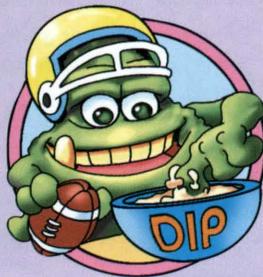
Keeping Food Safe to Eat

ABCD's of keeping food safe in a power outage. Knowing what to do in a power outage can save the food in your freezer or refrigerator. Here are tips on what to do:

Always keep freezer and refrigerator doors closed. A full freezer will hold freezing temperatures for about 2 days. A half-full freezer will do this for 1 day. You can refreeze or cook thawed foods that still contain ice crystals.

Be safe with refrigerated foods. Refrigerated foods will be safe if the power is off 4 hours or less, but you must keep the refrigerator door closed. If power might be off more than 4 hours, pack perishable foods in an insulated cooler with frozen gel packs. Perishable foods include meats, poultry, eggs, and milk and mixtures containing them.

Some foods are safe at room temperature for a few days, including dried fruit, cheddar or Swiss cheese, jelly, relish,



taco sauce, barbecue sauce, fruit juices, ketchup, and vinegar-based salad dressings. Pies and cakes with a pudding filling or cream cheese icing are **NOT SAFE** if left at room temperature for more than 2 hours.

Do not store foods outside because they may be exposed to the sun or unsanitary conditions, or may be eaten by animals.

Construct a plan before there is an outage. Keep gel packs in the freezer. Purchase some type of cooler. Buy a charcoal or gas grill or a camping stove for cooking outside. **NEVER** use this cooking equipment inside. Store bottled water to provide 1 gallon per person per day.

Determine the temperature of food, refrigerator, and freezer with a thermometer. The temperature of all three should be no higher than 41 degrees. Discard food if it has been above 41 degrees for over 2 hours. If you don't know how long the power was out, check to see if the ice cubes have melted. If they are **not** melted, frozen foods will probably be safe to use.

January Word Search

Find the words that fit the blanks in each sentence below; then circle those words in the grid. The words can go up, down, across, or sideways.

X	Q	U	T	V	F	V	E	S	X	P	E
Y	E	F	H	X	V	V	F	G	O	T	S
T	M	L	D	D	I	K	Q	R	A	U	E
E	X	J	P	T	R	E	T	L	E	A	E
I	G	B	C	M	H	I	P	V	W	I	H
R	F	A	X	I	O	N	E	I	J	C	C
A	S	I	H	N	A	C	B	D	D	M	M
V	R	N	S	E	A	S	O	N	A	C	A
T	S	I	L	Y	R	E	C	O	R	G	E
Z	Z	C	J	Q	C	V	P	T	O	D	R
E	R	M	Y	P	Y	R	A	M	I	D	C
E	G	A	M	I	Y	D	O	B	U	Y	B

- _____ is important to controlling your weight.
- _____ explains food groups and calorie needs.
- Break the _____ habit.
- Fruits, vegetables, whole-grain breads and cereals, and dried beans and peas are called _____ carbohydrates.
- Being physically _____ is important to good health.
- It is important for parents to encourage their children to eat a _____ of foods.
- _____ and self-concept are important to teens.
- Stick to your _____ when shopping.
- The best time to buy fresh fruits and vegetables is when they are in _____.
- Pies and cakes with a pudding filling or _____ icing need to be refrigerated.
- _____ beans and peas are good buys all year long.

Cooking Corner

Dried beans and peas (either canned or freshly cooked) are a good buy, year-round. They are low in fat and are excellent sources of fiber, vitamins, and minerals.

Tips for cooking dried beans and peas:

- Soak the raw beans or peas overnight, or for several hours, in cold water to cover. Discard soaking water.
- Place the beans in large pot. Add water to cover. If desired, lightly salt and add small amount of oil or fat.
- Cover and cook on low heat until tender, but not mushy (about 2 to 2-1/2 hours; dried peas and lentils need less cooking time) (Source: Michigan Bean Commission.)

Navy Bean and Carrot Soup

Ingredients:

- 2 cups dried navy beans, including 1 cup liquid (cooked without salt or fat)
- 4 cups raw carrots, sliced
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 large potatoes cut in small cubes
- 1 tablespoon margarine
- 1 cup canned chicken broth
- 1/2 teaspoon ground thyme
- 2 cups low-fat milk
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch, dissolved in water

Directions:

- In a large skillet, sauté carrots, onions, and potatoes in margarine for 10 minutes.
- Add cooked beans, with 1 cup bean liquid, chicken broth, and thyme.
- Cook until vegetables are tender.
- Mash/chop ingredients with potato masher or blender (optional).
- Add milk, then stir in cornstarch.
- Bring to a simmer and stir constantly until the soup thickens. If thicker soup is desired, add more cornstarch mixed with water.

Kids in the Kitchen:

Cowboy Bean Bake

(kids can make with an adult's help)

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 large onion, peeled and chopped
- 4 16-ounce cans beans (pinto, red kidney, navy, or great northern), drained
- 1 15-ounce can tomatoes, crushed
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon prepared mustard

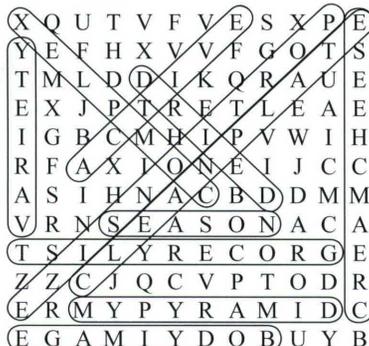
Directions:

- Heat oil in large pan or pot. Add onions and cook 5 minutes, while stirring.
- Stir in tomatoes, brown sugar, and mustard.
- Simmer for 20 minutes, stirring often.
- Stir in beans and reheat. Serve with cornbread or crackers. (Source: *Children's Step by Step Cookbook* by Angela Wilkes)

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

December Word Search Answers:

1. PORTION SIZE
2. MYPYRAMID
3. CLEAN PLATE
4. COMPLEX
5. ACTIVE
6. VARIETY
7. BODY IMAGE
8. GROCERY LIST
9. SEASON
10. CREAM CHEESE
11. DRIED



For more information on food, nutrition, and achieving a healthy weight, contact:

Or call this toll-free number: 1-888-814-7627

If you have access to the Internet, go to these sites:

- Healthy Futures Series: <http://www.ext.vt.edu/healthyfutures>
- MyPyramid Food Guide: <http://www.mypyramid.gov/pyramid/index.html>
- Food Stamps in Virginia: <http://www.dss.virginia.gov/benefit/foodstamp.html>

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Writers of this Newsletter Series:

State EFNEP/SCNEP Leaders at Virginia Tech:

- Ruby Cox, PhD, RD, State Coordinator
- Mary McFerren, Project Associate
- Melanie Cutlip, EFNEP/SCNEP Educational Designer

Area EFNEP/SCNEP Coordinators in Virginia Cooperative Extension Districts:

- Berline Brown, Southeast
- Viki Clark, Northern and Upper Northwest
- Beth Gillis, Central and Lower Northwest
- Mary Ann McFarland, Southwest
- Judy Midkiff, Northeast
- Extension Agents, with Food, Nutrition, & Health and Youth Responsibility:**
- Viola Holmes, RD, Albemarle/Charlottesville
- Amy Moore, Greensville/Emporia
- Nancy Stegon, RD, Prince William County
- Joan Wages, MS, Patrick County

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The Food Stamp Program provides nutrition assistance to people with low incomes. It can help you buy nutritious foods for healthy eating. To learn how to apply, call your local county or city **Department of Social Services** (listed under city/county government in phone book). For help in finding the correct local number, call this toll-free number: **1-800-552-3431** (M-F 8:15-5:00, except holidays). By calling the local DSS office, you can get other useful information about services you may need.

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