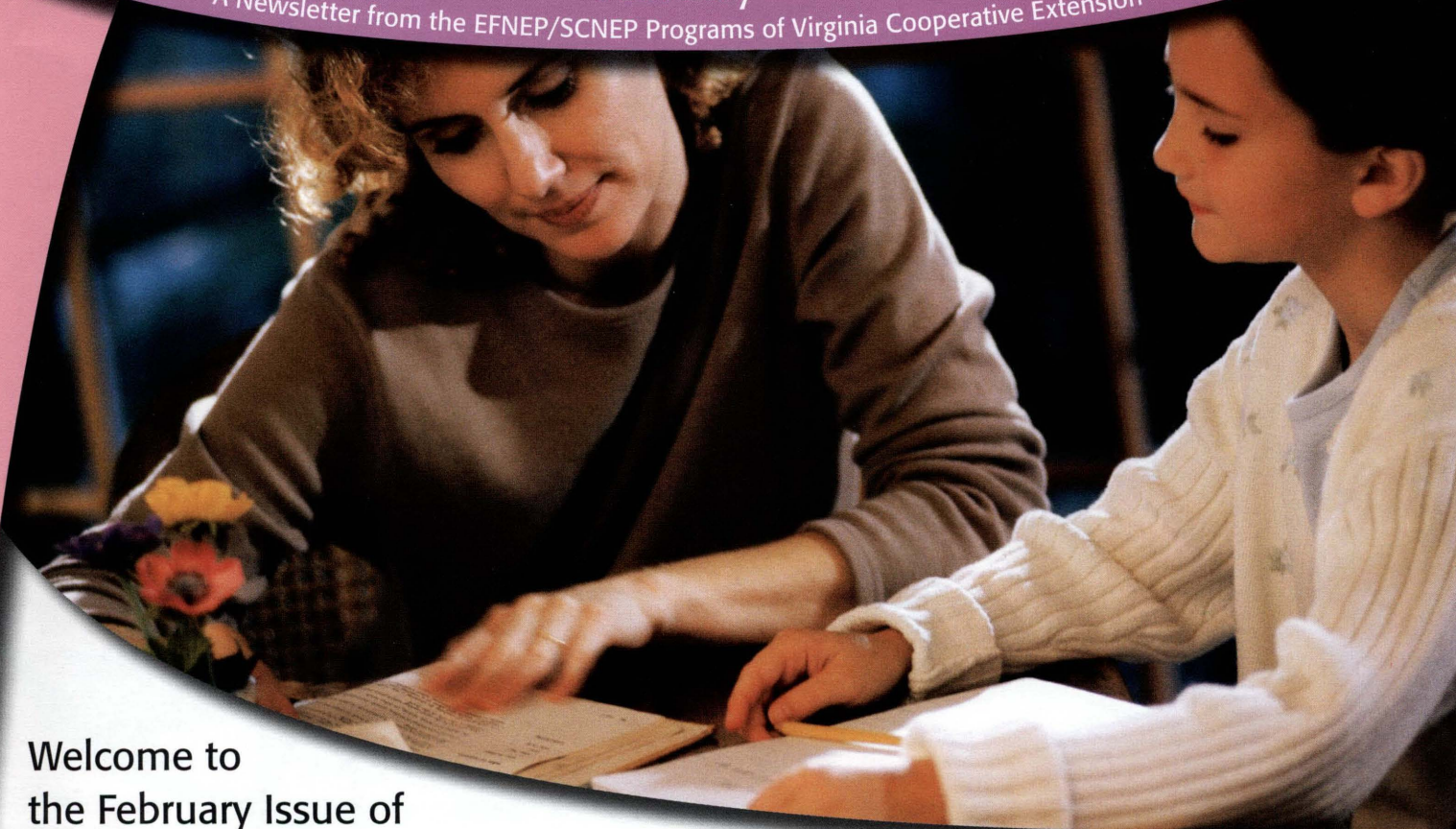


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Smart Choices for YOUNG FAMILIES

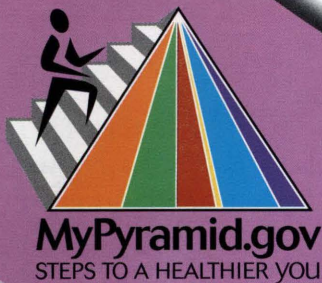
February

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



Welcome to
the February Issue of
Smart Choices for YOUNG FAMILIES.

February is the month we are reminded of the importance of showing love. Valentine's Day on February 14 provides a good opportunity to express appreciation to those we love. February is also National Heart Month and National Dental Health Month. Even more important than giving valentines, we should show our love and caring for others by taking care of our health and the health of our family members. This issue gives lots of good ways to protect our own heart and dental health, as well as that of our children.



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Nutrition and Health Tips for Today:

Go lean with protein. Most of us plan meals around meat or another protein source like eggs, fish, poultry, dried beans, or peas. These foods provide many important nutrients. In addition to protein, they have B-complex vitamins, iron, zinc, other minerals, and vitamin E. Dried beans and peas are also excellent sources of fiber.

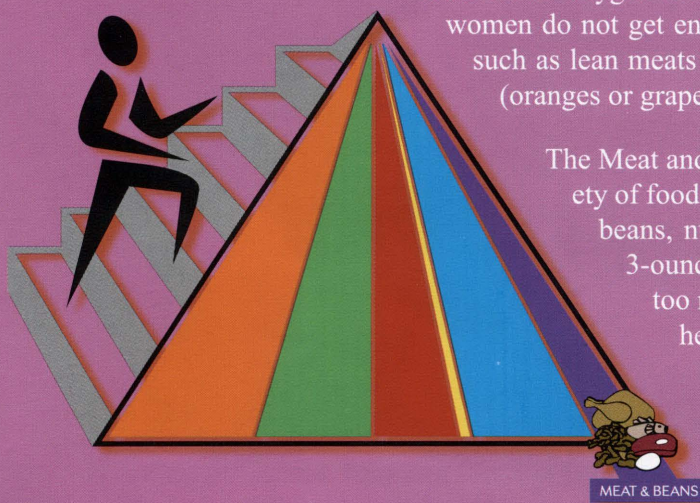
Proteins are building blocks for the body. They are used to build and repair bones, muscles, skin, and other tissue and to produce blood, hormones, and enzymes. High-protein foods reduce hunger between meals, helping to prevent overeating.

B vitamins:

- Release energy from food
- Help build red blood cells, nerve cells, and all tissue
- Keep the brain and nervous system healthy
- Protect against spina bifida and heart disease (folic acid)

Iron carries oxygen in the blood to all the cells of the body. Many teenage girls and younger women do not get enough iron, causing anemia. To prevent this, eat foods rich in iron, such as lean meats and iron-fortified cereals. Also eat or drink a source of Vitamin C (oranges or grapefruits or their juices) with meals to increase iron absorption.

The Meat and Beans Group is the best source of these nutrients. Choose a variety of foods from this group, including fish, lean meat, chicken, turkey, dried beans, nuts, and seeds. We need only 5 1/2 ounces of meat per day. A 3-ounce serving is about the size of a deck of cards. Many people eat too much meat, raising their risk for heart disease and cancer. The healthy way to go is to eat meat, fish, or poultry for only one meal each day. Then eat dried beans or peas as a main dish for other meals. One-fourth (1/4) cup of cooked dried beans or 1 tablespoon of peanut butter is equal to 1 ounce of meat.



Staying Healthy for a Lifetime

Heart health: Our lifestyle habits affect our heart health. Heart disease is the number one killer of both men and women. Habits like smoking, eating high-fat foods, not exercising, and being overweight increase our risk for heart disease. All of these can be changed to have a healthier heart.

A major way to reduce your risk for heart disease is to cut down on foods high in saturated fat, cholesterol, and trans-fat. These types of fat can clog blood vessels, leading to high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke.

Saturated fats and cholesterol are found in animal foods such as fatty meats, the skin of poultry, whole milk, ice cream, cheese, and butter. Many processed meats, such as bologna, sausage, and hot dogs are high in saturated fat. Trans-fats are found in many processed foods such as margarine, shortening, crackers, etc. These fats are formed when hydrogen is added to oil to make it solid.

What should you eat for a healthy heart?

1. Choose lean meats such as fish, poultry, and lean cuts of pork and beef.
2. Remove the skin from chicken and turkey, as there is a lot of fat under the skin.
3. Watch portion sizes of meat. Most adults need only 5 1/2 ounces per day (see the above section).
4. Drink 1% or skim milk.
5. Eat **low-fat** or **fat-free** yogurt, cottage cheese, ice cream, mayonnaise, and salad dressings.
6. Check labels to select foods with little or no trans-fat.
7. Go easy on gravies, sauces, salad dressings, mayonnaise, butter, and margarine. These foods usually contain a lot of fat.
8. Use low-fat cooking methods such as baking, broiling, and grilling, but limit frying.

Some people complain that the taste is just not the same when meats are baked or oven-broiled. Try adding flavor by using herbs, spices, garlic, and onion.

Staying Fit and Having Fun

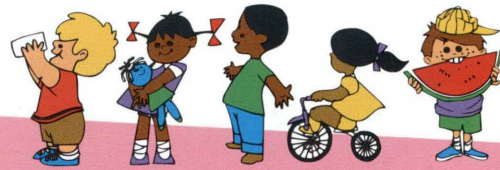
Heart-healthy physical activity. Too little physical activity is a risk factor for heart disease. Being active helps to keep your heart strong in these ways:

- Helps to control high blood pressure.
- Raises the level of HDL or “good” cholesterol.
- Reduces triglyceride levels.
- Helps you lose weight, or can help you keep from gaining weight.

To be heart healthy, physical activity does not have to be overly vigorous or boring. Rapid walking is a great choice. It can also be a favorite sport such as softball, basketball, volleyball or tennis. Everyday housework also counts. Let’s take a look at calories burned by just **30 minutes** of continuous activity:

- Sweeping, washing dishes, dusting, or cooking – burns 90-100 calories.
- Raking, sweeping, mopping, or mowing the lawn – burns 130-190 calories.
- Yard work such as digging or shoveling – burns over 200 calories.
- Fast walking, volleyball, or tennis – burns 120-190 calories.
- Jogging, cycling, or swimming – burns 200 calories or more.

Heart disease is the major cause of illness and death among both men and women. It is time to get physically active! Your heart and your loved ones will thank you!



Children’s Corner

What parents can do to prevent overweight in their children. You have probably heard that more and more children are becoming overweight – a serious health risk. You may have wondered how to prevent this in your child or what to do if your child is already overweight. With a child who is under 2 years of age, or is greatly overweight, you should talk with a doctor about what to do. Below are some things you can do to reduce the risk of children becoming overweight. This will also be good for the slightly-overweight child.

1. Offer a variety of healthy foods from the five groups of MyPyramid, especially fruits and vegetables. Keep raw, prepared fruits and vegetables and plain crackers available for snacks.
2. Allow sweets and chips only as an occasional treat. Otherwise, don’t have them in the house.
3. Give reduced-fat milk to children older than 2 years of age, but ask your doctor about this if your child is under 2 years.
4. Don’t let children get into a pattern of eating lots of fast foods, pizza, chips, sodas, candy, and hot dogs. This will likely lead to overweight.
5. With slightly overweight children, the goal is to slow or stop weight gain, rather than getting the child to lose weight. This can help the child to grow out of being overweight as their height increases.
6. When trying to change an older child’s eating habits, do it in a low-key, non-critical manner. Being too pushy and critical can cause a child to develop an eating disorder.
7. Teach your child to be physically active for at least one hour every day. Limit the time they are allowed to watch TV or play video games. Physical activity is a must for children to have a healthy weight.

Healthy smiles for good health. Our teeth help us to chew food, talk normally, and smile big. Good daily habits are a must for keeping teeth and gums healthy.

Healthy teeth and gums also help keep the rest of our bodies healthy. Children with untreated tooth decay miss more school, have difficulty chewing and speaking, and suffer pain.

Tips for a keeping a healthy smile.

- Tip #1:** Brush your teeth after every meal or at least twice a day.
- Tip #2:** Use toothpaste with fluoride. Place a “pea-size” amount on your brush. Use half that amount for young children who may not spit out all the toothpaste. Babies and toddlers can use “baby toothpaste” with no fluoride, unless they have had cavities in their baby teeth. If so, place a very small amount of fluoridated toothpaste on their brush or a washcloth.
- Tip #3:** Floss your teeth daily. At first, this seems like a hard habit to keep up, but your mouth will feel much better, your teeth and gums will be healthier, and your breath will be sweeter.
- Tip #4:** Limit amount and frequency of sugary foods. This includes candy, cookies, high-sugar cereals, and sugary drinks, such as Kool-Aid, sodas, and fruity drinks. The best drinks for the whole family are milk and water. The best time to eat foods with sugar is at mealtime – not between meals.
- Tip #5:** See your local dentist twice a year, if possible, so that the dentist and dental hygienist can check your teeth and find problems early.

(From Susan Pharr, Virginia Department of Health)

Saving Money at the Grocery Store

Buying store brands vs national brands. Fixing healthy, tasty meals and snacks within your budget is a great way to show love to family members on Valentine's Day and all year. Also, saving money at the grocery store may leave more money for cards and gifts. One of the easiest ways to save at the grocery store is to buy store or generic brands of food instead of national or name brands. Store brands are often just as nutritious and tasty as national brands.

Try store brands of a certain food – at least once – to find those that your family likes. Store brands of cereals, crackers, cookies, and canned goods are usually as good as the national brand.



Things to help you decide if a store brand is a good buy:

1. Check the food label to see if the nutrient content of the store brand is as high as the national brand. You will usually find the same value for similar foods.
2. Check to see if the store brand contains the same amount of food and same number of servings as the national brand. Some items that appear to be cheaper may contain more water, thus fewer servings of food. You may only be able to tell this from actually trying the store brand.
3. Once you know a store brand is a good buy, purchase extra amounts when that item is on sale.
4. When first trying a new brand with your family, don't mention the change to see if they will notice the difference.

Keeping Food Safe

Kitchen safety checklist. Following the practices below can help keep you and your family safe from food poisoning. To see how you are doing, place an "X" in front of each practice that you are now doing in the kitchen.

- I always wash my hands with soap and warm water and clean my fingernails before handling food.
- I wipe up spills on the floor as soon as they occur.
- I keep cabinet doors and drawers closed so no one will bump into them.
- I always cut away from myself and use a cutting board when I use a knife.
- I keep knife blades sharp and clean.
- I refrigerate leftovers quickly (within 2 hours or less after a meal).
- I avoid plugging in appliances when my hands are wet.
- I don't let appliance cords dangle off counters so that children cannot pull appliances off the counters.
- I keep toys and other items out of areas of the kitchen floor where people walk and might fall over them.
- I bend my knees and lift using my leg muscles, not my back muscles when I lift heavy items.

When using the kitchen range or microwave:

- I always turn pan handles to the inside.
- I always open pans lids away from me.
- I always use hot mitts or pot holders when handling heated pans and skillets.
- I never hold a child while standing near hot items and never leave children alone in the kitchen while food is being cooked.
- I keep flammable items away from the stove.
- I vent foods to be cooked to prevent steam burns.
- I always avoid putting any metal, twist ties, or colored paper products in the microwave.
- I never turn on the microwave oven while it is empty.



If you are doing most of the above, you are a "safe-chef." Are there any practices above that you are not doing? If so, you can focus on learning to do those things, so you will be a "super-safe chef."

Cooking Corner

Oatmeal Pancakes

(makes 18 4-inch pancakes)

(Oatmeal is a very good source of soluble fiber which is "heart healthy.")

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 cups baking mix, such as Jiffy or Bisquick
- 1 cup oatmeal
- 1 2/3 cups low-fat milk
- 1 egg
- Margarine (or cooking spray) for the frying pan or griddle

Directions:

1. Beat all ingredients with wire whisk until smooth.
2. Place small amount of margarine in large frying pan (or coat pan with cooking spray) and heat on medium until margarine melts and spreads over surface.
3. For each pancake, pour about 1/4 cup batter in hot pan, leaving some space between.
4. Let cook until edges of pancake appear dry, then turn and cook other side to golden brown.
5. Top with syrup or other toppings. Healthy ideas: top with fresh or frozen sliced fruit and small amount of sugar or sprinkle with cinnamon and small amount of sugar.

Kids in the Kitchen

"Have a Heart" Pancakes (for Valentine's Day)

(Kids can prepare with help of adult)

Ingredients:

Use the same ingredients as for the Oatmeal Pancakes above.

Directions:

1. Follow the directions for the oatmeal pancakes. Prepare the batter using a wire whisk. Divide this batter evenly into two bowls.
2. Stir enough red food coloring into one bowl of batter to turn the batter deep pink.
2. Rub margarine onto two large frying pans and heat to medium hot.
3. For each pancake, pour 1/4 cup of batter into the hot pan, making 9 pink pancakes and 9 regular pancakes.
4. Place the cooked pancakes on sheet of aluminum foil to cool for two minutes.
5. Cut a heart center in each pancake using a 2-inch heart-shaped cookie cutter.
6. Place mini-pancake hearts of one color into center of pancakes of the other color, making 18 servings.
7. If needed, reheat pancakes briefly in microwave or warm oven.
8. Serve with frozen or fresh, sliced strawberries and enjoy!

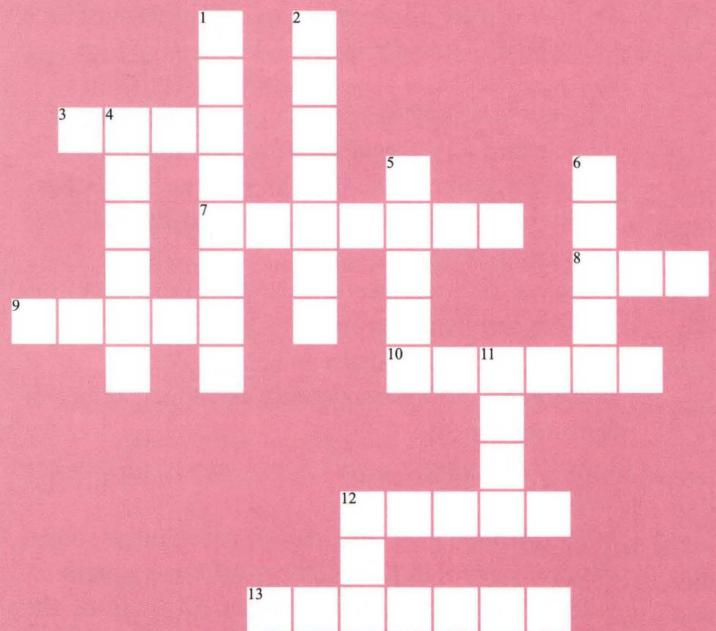
February Crossword Puzzle

Across

3. To keep children at a healthy weight avoid _____ foods, pizza, chips, sodas, candy, and hot dogs.
7. Offer your children a _____ of foods.
8. Children should be physically active for at least _____ hour every day.
9. The #1 killer of men and women is _____ disease.
10. Healthy _____ need healthy teeth and gums.
12. _____-fats are found in many processed foods.
13. _____ is a nutrient used to build and repair bones, muscles, skin, and other tissue and to produce blood, hormones, and enzymes.

Down

1. Physical _____ is important to heart health.
2. A way to stretch your food dollars is to buy _____ brands.
4. Saturated fat and cholesterol are found in _____ foods.
5. The meat and _____ food group is the best source of protein, B vitamins, and iron.
6. _____ brands of a certain food are usually as good as national brands.
11. _____ is a nutrient that carries oxygen in the blood to all the cells in the body.
12. Visit your dentist _____ times each year.



February Word Puzzle Answers:

Answer Key:

Across

3. fast
7. variety
8. one
9. heart
10. smiles
12. trans
13. protein

Down

1. activity
2. generic
4. animal
5. beans
6. store
11. iron
12. two

**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>

www.ext.vt.edu

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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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