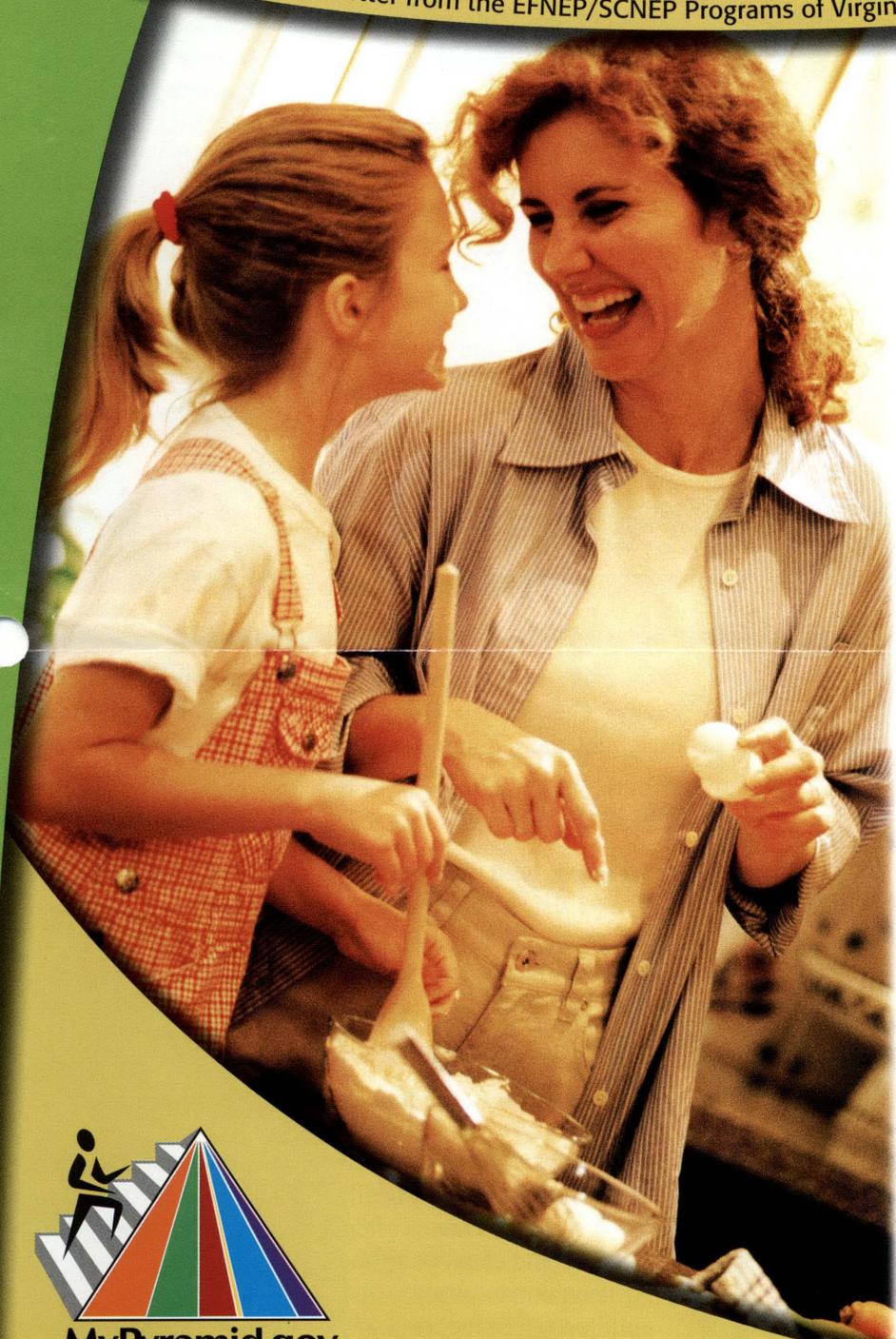


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Smart Choices for YOUNG FAMILIES

April

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



Welcome to the April Issue of ***Smart Choices for YOUNG FAMILIES.***

April brings warmer weather and the blooming of flowers – raising everyone’s spirits. Easter also occurs in this month, making it a great time to think about eggs. In this issue, you will learn about egg nutrition and buying, storing, and cooking them safely. You will also learn about the importance of eating a good breakfast.



MyPyramid.gov
STEPS TO A HEALTHIER YOU

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Nutrition and Health Tips for Today

Eat breakfast for better health and alertness. Everyone needs a healthy breakfast. After going through the night with no food, your body needs refueling. A healthy breakfast:

- Helps children to be more alert and do better in school.
- Helps adults perform better on the job.
- Helps adults and children maintain a healthy weight.
- Reduces irritability and tiredness.
- Gives children and adults energy for physical activity and for work at school or on the job.

Many people skip breakfast because they feel they don't have time. Do yourself a favor and don't let this be your excuse. Here are some quick, nutritious breakfast choices:

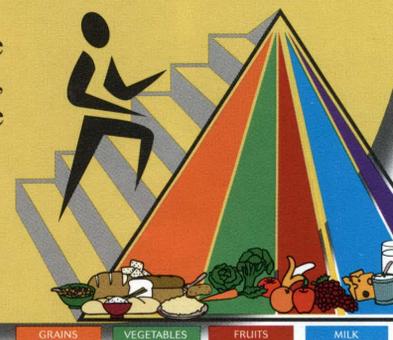
1. Leftover pizza and a glass of 100% fruit juice
2. Whole-grain cereal with low-fat or skim milk and a piece of fruit
3. Egg sandwich with cheese on whole-wheat toast and a glass of real fruit juice
4. Healthy grab-and-go choices such as:
 - whole-grain muffin, yogurt, and a piece of fresh fruit, with your coffee

- whole-wheat bagel or English muffin with peanut butter and a cup of low-fat chocolate milk
- boiled egg (cooked the night before), whole-grain crackers, and bottle of real fruit juice

A healthy breakfast has foods from at least 3 of the 5 *MyPyramid* food groups. It should contain a source of protein such as eggs, milk, cheese, or lean meat. It is also a good idea to eat a high-fiber food, such as unpeeled fruit, high-fiber cereal, or whole-grain bread.

Here are some healthy breakfast patterns:

- Low-fat milk over whole-grain or all-bran cereal, with fruit or fruit juice
- Scrambled eggs with cheese on whole-grain bread, bagel, or English muffin, and a piece of unpeeled fruit
- Tomato or other vegetable juice and a toasted cheese sandwich on whole-grain bread



Staying Healthy for a Lifetime

Preventing anemia. Anemia is a condition in which red blood cells do not contain enough iron. This affects many young children and pregnant women. It is harmful to health and the nervous system.

Iron-deficiency anemia may be caused by one of the following:

- Premature birth of an infant (affects infant)
- Giving a child regular milk before 1 year of age
- Giving formula that is not iron-fortified
- Eating pattern that is low in iron-rich foods
- Not eating enough fruits and vegetables to get enough vitamin C

Anemia makes you feel tired, irritable, and depressed. A child with anemia may have difficulty paying attention and learning. Have your child checked each year for anemia. If you have symptoms, get yourself checked for anemia. If anemia is present, the doctor will usually prescribe iron pills.

You can prevent anemia by eating iron-rich foods. These include lean beef, pork, poultry, fish, and organ meats. Young children usually don't eat much meat. They need other sources of iron, such as dried beans and peas, dark leafy greens, eggs, nuts, seeds, dried fruit, and iron-enriched cereals, breads, and pasta.

Also, make sure you and your child have a good source of vitamin C every day. Good sources include oranges, grapefruit, and their juices, cantaloupe, watermelon, strawberries, tomatoes, broccoli, cabbage, and apple and grape juice with added vitamin C.

Preventing lead poisoning. A child with anemia is at increased risk of getting lead poisoning. This is a serious health problem! A major source of lead is paint from the walls of buildings that are more than 20 years old. Other sources are drinking water, some plastics, soil, and household dust.

Take these actions to reduce the risk of lead poisoning:

1. Have your children checked each year for lead poisoning at a doctor's office or health clinic.
2. Wash children's hands often and always before they eat.
3. Vacuum and clean your house often.
4. At least once a week, wash toys and other objects that children put in their mouths.
5. Wash pacifiers and bottles after they fall on the floor.
6. Fix healthy meals and snacks from a variety of foods from all 5 *MyPyramid* food groups.
7. Do not store food or liquids in pottery, china, or ceramic containers unless they are certified as lead-free.

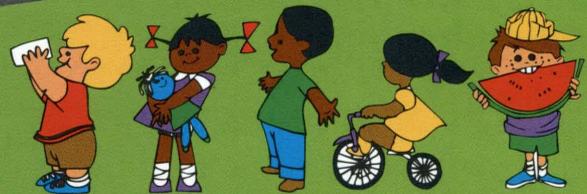
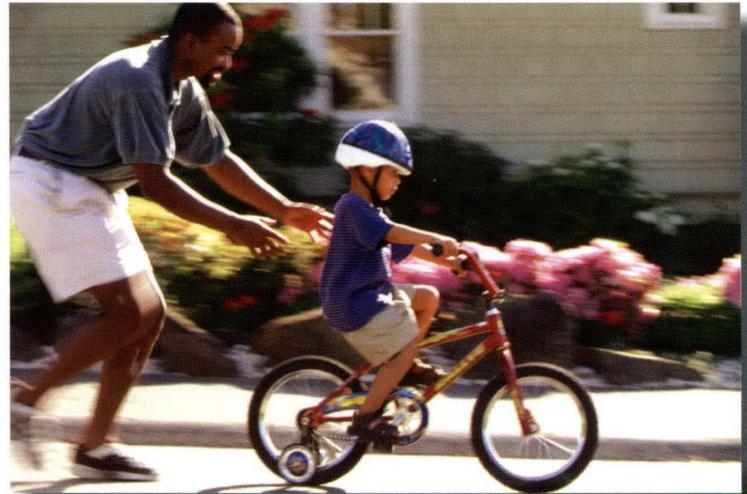
Staying Fit and Having Fun

Get the whole family involved in physical activity. You may have made the important decision to get regular physical activity. But if you have a busy family and work life, you may find it difficult to fit regular physical activity into your schedule. Perhaps your children's activities always take priority. Also, your job, along with the unending housework, may take most of your energy. With these barriers, you have to be creative to fit in regular physical activity. Below are some activities that the whole family can enjoy together. These will increase family togetherness and help everyone to become more fit and healthy.

- Put your child in a stroller and push the stroller around for at least 10 minutes 3 or 4 times a day. Go a bit faster than usual.
- Put on some good dancing music and dance with your child. Both of you will enjoy this.
- When doing housework, turn on the music and make it a fun routine. For example, try dusting to the beat of your favorite song. A music-filled house makes it easier to get children involved in cleaning chores. The best part is that dreaded housework will get done while the family gets a healthy dose of exercise.
- Since warmer weather has arrived, take your child on a bicycle ride.

- Walking together is always a great activity, whether around your yard, in the neighborhood, or at the mall.
- Take part in your child's play activities such as throwing a Frisbee, shooting baskets, skating, or rollerblading.

Remember, no matter how full your schedule, there are activities that you and your children can fit in. Physical activity can be fun and provide that "together time" that the whole family will treasure.



Children's Corner

Eggs – are they good for children? You may have heard that eggs are high in cholesterol and think you should not feed them to your child. But consider this good news! Eggs are a low-cost source of high-quality protein and contain many other nutrients. Some studies show that **eating up to 5 eggs a week does not raise blood cholesterol.** Instead of worrying about how many eggs children should eat, think about their overall eating pattern. Offer a variety of foods with eggs included about every other day. Don't overdo any one food or exclude others.

Eggs are quick and easy to cook. They can be boiled, poached, scrambled, or made into omelets (See recipe in Cooking Corner). Scrambled eggs on an English muffin make a great sandwich for children.

Decorating eggs is a fun Easter holiday tradition. This is a good time to teach children how to cook hard-boiled eggs and how to store them safely.

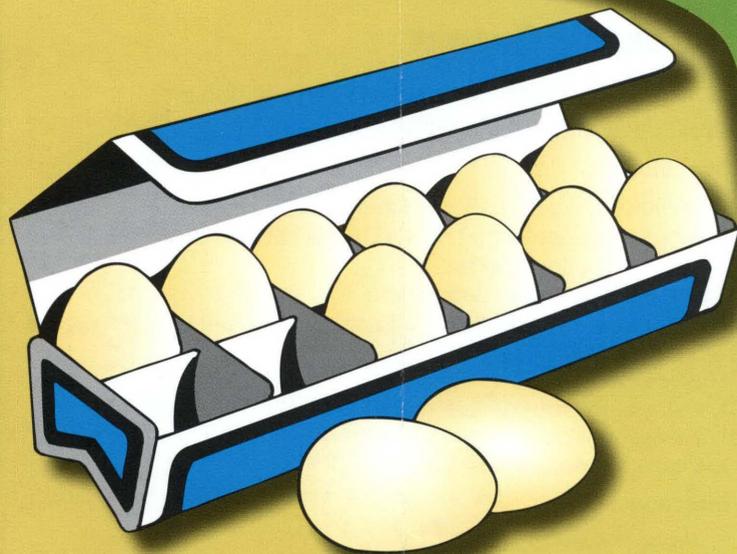
Steps in fixing hard-boiled eggs:

1. Place eggs in a saucepan with enough cold tap water to cover. Cover and heat over high heat until water boils.
2. Reduce to medium heat and cook for 12 minutes.
3. Remove from heat and place under very cold running tap water or place eggs in ice water until completely cool. This helps yolks to stay bright yellow.
4. At this point, you can color and decorate them based on directions given on the egg dye package.
5. If you plan to eat them right away, peel by cracking shell on all sides. To peel, roll egg between hands to loosen shell. You can safely keep "unpeeled" boiled eggs in the refrigerator for 1 week.
6. Do not eat boiled eggs that have been left out of the refrigerator for longer than 2 hours.

Saving Money at the Grocery Store

Buying eggs. Eggs are low in cost and can be used in many ways. They are an excellent source of protein, iron, and several other nutrients. Here are some tips to remember when buying eggs:

1. Buy only eggs that are marked with Grade A or Grade AA.
2. Decide if the medium size or large size is the best buy. If there is less than a 7-cent difference in the price between the two sizes, the smaller eggs are the best buy. If there is a 7-cent or more difference, the larger size is the best buy.
3. Remember that the color of the eggshell makes no difference in the nutrient value, flavor, keeping quality, or other characteristics.
4. Do not buy eggs that are not refrigerated, as they may be unsafe to eat.
5. Do not buy out-of-date eggs. Look for the freshness date on the carton that will be listed after one of these phrases: "Best before" or possibly "Sell by" or "Use by." It is best not to buy eggs with this date missing. The "Best before" date is based on a 3-week period between the producer packing the eggs and their use by the consumer.
6. Open the carton and check to see if the eggs are clean and free of cracks. Do not buy any that are dirty or cracked.
7. Take eggs home from the grocery store within 2 hours and refrigerate them immediately.
8. If you cannot use eggs before the freshness date runs out, freeze them by following the directions in the Keeping Food Safe section below.



Keeping Food Safe

Get cracking on egg safety! Eggs are a great source of protein, but this makes them a good place for harmful bacteria to grow. Here are some steps for the safe use of eggs.

1. Don't eat or even taste raw eggs or mixtures containing raw eggs. If a recipe calls for raw eggs that won't be cooked, use pasteurized eggs.
2. When using raw, whole eggs, yolks, or whites in fried or scrambled eggs, omelets, or recipes, the mixture should be cooked to 160 degrees. Leftovers should be heated to steaming. Using a food thermometer is the only way to be sure that egg dishes have reached a safe temperature.
3. Buy only Grade A or Grade AA eggs that have no cracks in the shells.
4. Eggs must be kept in the refrigerator. Only buy eggs that are refrigerated. Get them home and in the refrigerator in 2 hours or less. Store them in coldest part of refrigerator – not in the door.
5. Do not wash eggs and leave them in the carton. Grade A and Grade AA eggs have already been washed, sanitized, and coated with mineral oil.
6. Use raw eggs within the "Best before" date on the carton. This is based on a 3-week period between the producer packing the eggs and their use by the consumer.
7. Use hard-cooked/boiled eggs immediately or refrigerate them. If unpeeled, they are safe for 1 week. Leftover yolks and whites should be refrigerated and used within 4 days.
8. Eggs can be frozen and kept up to 1 year. To freeze, choose scrambled or separated eggs.
 - Scrambled eggs: remove egg from the shell and mix white and yolk together before freezing. Several eggs can be frozen together.
 - Separated eggs: remove the shell and separate the yolk from the white and freeze in separate containers. Several yolks or several whites can be frozen together.
9. After using eggs, wash hands, utensils, containers, equipment, and work areas with warm soapy water.
10. If a recipe calls for uncooked meringue, substitute whipped topping. Meringue-topped pies should be baked at 350 degrees for 15 minutes.
11. If using hard-boiled eggs for Easter eggs, do not eat them if they are left at room temperature for more than 2 hours. Use plastic eggs for Easter egg hunts or discard hard-cooked Easter eggs after the hunt. Do not eat cracked or dirty Easter eggs.



Cooking Corner

Spinach and Cheese Quiche (a main dish pie)

(Makes 9 servings; rich in calcium and iron)

Ingredients:

10-ounce package frozen, chopped spinach, thawed
 8-ounce container low-fat ricotta cheese OR 12-ounce container of low-fat cottage cheese
 8 eggs, beaten slightly with a fork
 1/2 cup of grated cheddar or Swiss cheese (reduced-fat cheese works well)
 3 tablespoons flour
 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
 1/2 teaspoon salt
 1/4 cup chopped onions

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°.
2. Spray 9" square pan or 9" baking dish with cooking spray.
3. Cook spinach about 10 minutes and drain well.
4. Mix together cheeses and eggs.
5. Mix together flour, pepper, and salt. Stir in a small amount of cold water until smooth. Add this to the egg-cheese mixture.
6. Stir in spinach and onion.
7. Pour into baking dish. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes. When done, center of pie will be puffy and not runny.
8. Serve with a fruit salad and whole-wheat bread.

Kids in the Kitchen

Vegetable-Cheese Omelet (Kids can prepare, with adult help)

(Makes 4 omelets)

Ingredients:

8 eggs
 1/4 cup water
 1/2 cup grated reduced-fat cheddar cheese
 1/2 cup chopped tomato
 1/3 cup chopped green pepper
 1/3 cup chopped onion
 (Can substitute other vegetables as desired)

Directions:

1. Beat eggs and water with a fork in a large bowl.
2. In a separate bowl, mix the tomato, green pepper, and onion.
3. Place a skillet on the stove burner and add a teaspoon of cooking oil. Heat on medium-high until a drop of water sizzles.
4. Pour 1/4 of the egg mixture into the pan and cover bottom.
5. Cook for about 2 minutes, lifting edges to allow raw egg to run to the edges of the pan.
6. When eggs are no longer runny, sprinkle 1/4 of the grated cheese and vegetable mixture on 1/2 of the omelet.
7. With egg turner, fold the half without toppings over the other half of the omelet.
8. Turn off heat, but leave pan on burner and continue to cook omelet for another 2 minutes.
9. Remove omelet to a plate and repeat cooking instructions for the other 3 omelets.
10. Serve with whole-wheat toast and juice and raw apple wedges or other raw fruit.

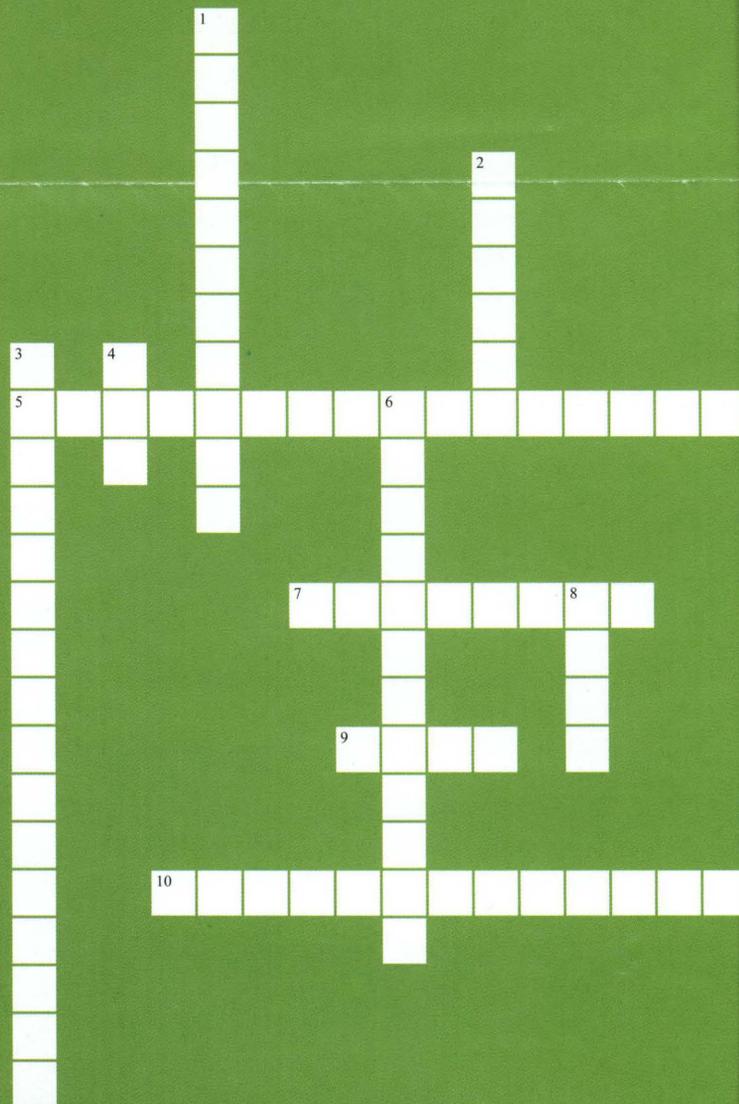
April Crossword Puzzle

Across

5. A _____ has food from at least 3 of the 5 *MyPyramid* food groups.
7. Eating breakfast helps _____ to be more alert and do better in school.
9. Eggs are an excellent source of protein and _____.
10. A child with anemia is at greater risk of getting _____.

Down

1. A food _____ is the only way to be sure that egg dishes have reached a safe temperature.
2. A condition in which red blood cells do not contain enough iron is _____.
3. The entire family needs to be involved in _____.
4. Do not eat _____ eggs or partially cooked eggs.
6. Eggs must be kept in the _____.
8. _____ are quick and easy to prepare and low in cost.



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April Crossword Puzzle Answers:

Across:

- 5. HEALTHY BREAKFAST
- 7. CHILDREN
- 9. IRON
- 10. LEAD POISONING

Down:

- 1. THERMOMETER
- 2. ANEMIA
- 3. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
- 4. RAW
- 6. REFRIGERATOR
- 8. EGGS

**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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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.

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