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Smart Choices for YOUNG FAMILIES

August

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



Welcome to the August Issue of ***Smart Choices for Young Families***.

The month of August brings an end to summer vacation and thoughts turn to the beginning of school. One good thing about August is that lots of vegetables are coming into season, providing a variety of nutritious vegetables at a lower cost than at other times. This issue gives information on the many benefits of vegetables, as well as some delicious recipes.



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Nutrition and Health Tips for Today

Mom was wise when she said, "Eat your vegetables." Vegetables are naturally low in fat and calories and they are packed with nutrients. One of those nutrients is vitamin A.

Your body needs vitamin A for:

- growth (childhood)
- healthy bones and teeth
- good eyesight and healthy skin
- fighting infections
- coping with stress
- healthy brain and nervous system, especially with aging

Vegetables are also high in fiber and antioxidants that help fight many diseases and conditions. Eating more vegetables, while cutting down on high-fat foods, can help prevent obesity and overweight, heart disease, stroke, and many types of cancer.

Adults should eat about 2-1/2 cups of vegetables each day. Children need 1-1/2 to 2 cups, depending on their size and activity. Choose a dark green or deep orange vegetable each day. Spinach, broccoli, mustard and turnip greens, carrots, and sweet potatoes are rich in vitamin A and many other nutrients. If you don't like these, try others. Also try different ways of preparing vegetables. Children usually like vegetables better if they are raw or not over-cooked.



Staying Healthy for a Lifetime

Preventing Colon Cancer. The colon makes up a major portion of the large intestine, which is part of the digestive system. It is also called the bowel. The digestive system breaks down food into parts that can be absorbed. The colon's job is to store and eliminate waste from the body.

Here are some factors that increase your risk for colon cancer:

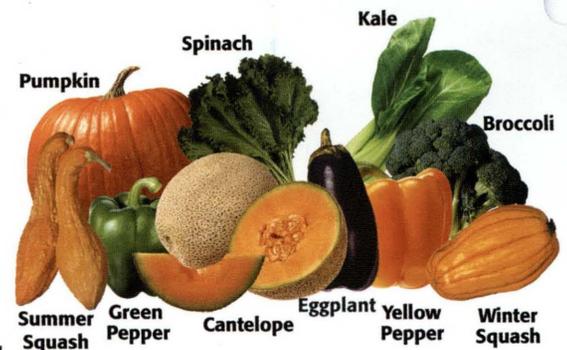
- family history of colon cancer
- presence of colon polyps (little pockets that form in the lining of the large intestine that can collect waste and become infected)
- being age 50 or older
- long-term eating pattern that is high in fat and low in vegetables and fruits
- limited physical activity over many years
- smoking and/or heavy alcohol intake

Signs that **may** indicate colon cancer are blood in the feces, change in bowel habits (severe constipation or diarrhea), and major changes in the size of bowel movements. Ask your family doctor or gynecologists to check your feces for blood.

Reduce your risk of colon cancer by adopting these healthy habits:

1. By age 50, have a colonoscopy to check for colon polyps.
2. Eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables to get more fiber.

Especially eat more orange, yellow, red, and dark green fruits and vegetables that are rich in a group of nutrients called "carotenoids." Here are some particularly good choices.



3. Eat at least 3 servings of whole-grain breads and cereals each day: Whole grains provide fiber and phytonutrients. Fiber helps to keep bowel movements regular. Fiber and phytonutrients help protect colon walls from damage by harmful chemicals that may be in food. Whole-wheat bread, brown rice, bran cereals, and oatmeal are high in fiber.



4. Eat fewer high-fat foods and reduce your intake of saturated fats (fat from beef, pork, whole milk, lard, and butter). Choose low-fat foods, such as baked, broiled, or steamed chicken, turkey, fish, and lean cuts of beef and pork; skim or 1% milk; and a variety of fruits and vegetables.

Staying Fit and Having Fun

Staying healthy and fit for a lifetime depends on getting regular physical activity. If you have made a decision to be more active, good for you! You are more likely to succeed if you design a fitness routine that is right for you. Before doing this, consult your doctor for advice on activities that are best for you, based on your health or physical limitations.

The first step in becoming more active is to **choose an activity that is right for you**. What do you enjoy most – walking, swimming, biking, dancing, skating, group aerobic exercise, etc.? Also, choose an activity that is convenient for you to do on a regular basis.

Next, set a **reasonable** goal and don't overdo it in the beginning. Your first session should leave you feeling energized, not worn out! For example – if you choose walking, walk only 10 minutes on the first day. Then gradually increase the time and distance over a few weeks, until you are walking at least 30 minutes a day. This can be done in three bouts of 10 minutes each. Here are some steps to help you design a fitness program that is right for you.

1. Be specific – decide on these things ahead of time

- **What** activity you will do,
- **Where** you will do this activity,

- **When** you will do this activity, and
- **How** often you will do this activity.

2. Be realistic about your fitness routine

- Don't do too much too soon!
- Plan to start out gradually at a pace that is comfortable for you.
- Gradually increase the amount you do.

3. Set short-term goals

- Consider starting with weekly goals. For example, each week add 5 minutes to your fitness program.
- Avoid the "all or nothing" way of thinking – If you miss a day, make it up. Just don't give



Cooking Corner

Squash Casserole

Ingredients:

- 2 to 3 cups cooked, summer squash (can use zucchini or yellow squash)
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 eggs, beaten (use only the white if desired)
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoon light margarine (melted)
- 1/2 cup bread crumbs

Directions:

1. Heat oven to 375°.
2. Mix squash, onion, egg, milk, sugar, and salt.
3. Put in greased baking dish.
4. Mix margarine and bread crumbs and spread on top.
5. Bake 45 minutes at 375°.

Hula Muffins

Ingredients:

- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1/3 cup vegetable oil
- 2 eggs or 4 egg whites
- 1 cup shredded carrots
- 3/4 cup canned, crushed pineapple, well drained
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup whole-wheat flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg (can use cinnamon)

Directions:

1. Heat oven to 425°.
2. Grease 12-cup muffin pan (may use paper cup liners if desired)
3. Stir together sugar, oil, eggs, carrots, and pineapple in medium size bowl.
4. Stir in remaining ingredients, until dry ingredients are moistened.
5. Spoon evenly into the 12 muffin cups.
6. Bake 13 to 17 minutes or until light golden brown. Test for doneness by inserting a toothpick.
7. Cool 5 minutes.

Keeping Food Safe

With warm weather, flies, roaches, and other pests will want to make your house their home. These insects can get into food and deposit waste and bacteria causing food to become unsafe. They may leave waste and bacteria on kitchen surfaces, which can get into food during preparation. The best way to prevent this is to stop bugs from coming into your home in the first place. You can “debug” your home with the following steps:



1. Keep the kitchen clean and clutter free.

- Put away food soon after meals.
- Wash and store dishes and utensils as soon as possible.
- Discard crumbs and wipe spills from all surfaces.
- Put garbage into a tightly covered garbage can or closed plastic bag.
- Eliminate clutter where bugs can hide.

2. Prevent bugs from getting into your home.

- Check food packaging, boxes, and grocery bags for bugs when unpacking groceries.
- Do not purchase packaged foods that are damaged or unsealed.
- Keep pets clean and free of fleas and ticks. Clean up their messes.
- Place screens or grates over drains and vents.
- Keep flies out by putting intact screens on doors and windows.
- Seal cracks in walls, floors, and windows.
- If using pesticides to kill bugs, closely follow package directions.

3. Store foods properly.

- Cover and place all perishable leftovers and cooked foods in the refrigerator.
- Store staples and non-perishable foods in air-tight containers, such as jars with tight-fitting lids and plastic bags.
- Use packaged, dry grain foods within 4 months. Check the “use-by” date and use the food before that date.
- Keep pets out of the kitchen and keep their feeding dishes clean. Store pet food in a sealed container.

4. Eliminate water sources.

- Repair leaky pipes and drippy faucets.
- Wrap sweaty pipes to keep them dry.

ABCs of Cooking for Kids:

Always have an adult involved.

Be sure to measure properly:

- Spoon dry ingredients lightly into a cup or measuring spoon until over-full, then level off the top with a knife or other straight edge.
- Use the back of a spoon to firmly pack brown sugar into a measuring cup before leveling off the top.
- Measure liquids in a see-through measuring cup. Place the cup on a counter, then pour in liquid. Check for the correct amount by reading the measurement markings at eye level.

Cool hands are important. Use pot holders when taking hot pans out of the oven.

Don't handle sharp knives. Let a grown-up do the chopping.

Eating raw dough or batter is a NO! NO! Raw eggs may contain bacteria that can make you sick.

Fight food poisoning and messiness by wiping up spills right away. Wear an apron and wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before you handle food.

Get ready – Set – Cook!

Children's Corner



Do you have trouble getting your children to eat vegetables? Getting children to eat those veggies will be a CINCH with these tips:

Call the vegetable a different name such as calling broccoli “trees.”

Incorporate veggies into recipes such as soups, spaghetti sauces, and pot pies.

Name vegetable dishes a fun name such as Sponge Bob Squash or Cookie Monster Carrots.

Cut the veggies into different shapes (circles, squares, triangles).

Hide the veggies under tasty sauces such as a low-fat cheese sauce.

Have family fun with vegetable picking.

If available, take your children to a “pick-your-own” farm. This is good physical activity and children will be more likely to eat what they have picked.

Call the local Virginia Cooperative Extension Office to locate farms where you can pick your own fruits and vegetables. You might even want to gather extras for freezing or canning. Your EFNEP or SCNEP Program Assistant can help you learn how to do this.

Saving Money at the Grocery Store

Be a Savvy Vegetable Buyer. If we had to choose only one group of food to eat for the most nutrition, it would be vegetables. You might be thinking that vegetables are too expensive. Below are some ways to cut the cost of vegetables and get the most for your food dollar.

- 1. Be a seasonal shopper.** Buy vegetables and fruits while they are in season, when they are most abundant, and may be locally grown. Locally-grown vegetables usually taste better because they are vine-ripened. During August, a large variety of vegetables come into season, such as tomatoes, corn, green beans, squash, and many others.
- 2. Avoid convenience items.** Ready-prepared items, such as frozen vegetables with sauces, cost more. Deli salads and other dishes will usually cost more than homemade. Save money by buying fresh vegetables and preparing them yourself. However, during the winter, canned vegetables are usually lower in cost and just as nutritious as the fresh item.
- 3. Buy vegetables from the produce section, not the salad bar.** Vegetables and fruits on the salad bar usually cost more than those in the produce section.

4. If available, buy vegetables at a farmer's market or pick-your-own farm, and take advantage of gleaning opportunities. Ask your SCNEP or EFNEP Program Assistant or call your local Extension office about locations of farmer's markets, pick-your-own farms, and gleaning locations in your area.

5. Stop wastage of vegetables with these actions:

- Use fresh vegetables before they go bad, such as freezing or canning for later use.
- Don't buy damaged or decayed vegetables or dented cans even at a low price.
- Handle produce carefully.
- Learn the desirable characteristics of fresh vegetables by asking your EFNEP or SCNEP Program Assistant or calling your local Extension Office.
- Store leftovers in the refrigerator, but do not leave vegetables or fruits in opened metal cans.
- To prevent loss of nutrients, cook vegetables whole or in large chunks and in the smallest amount of water possible.
- Don't overcook vegetables as this reduces nutrients and makes them unappealing to children.

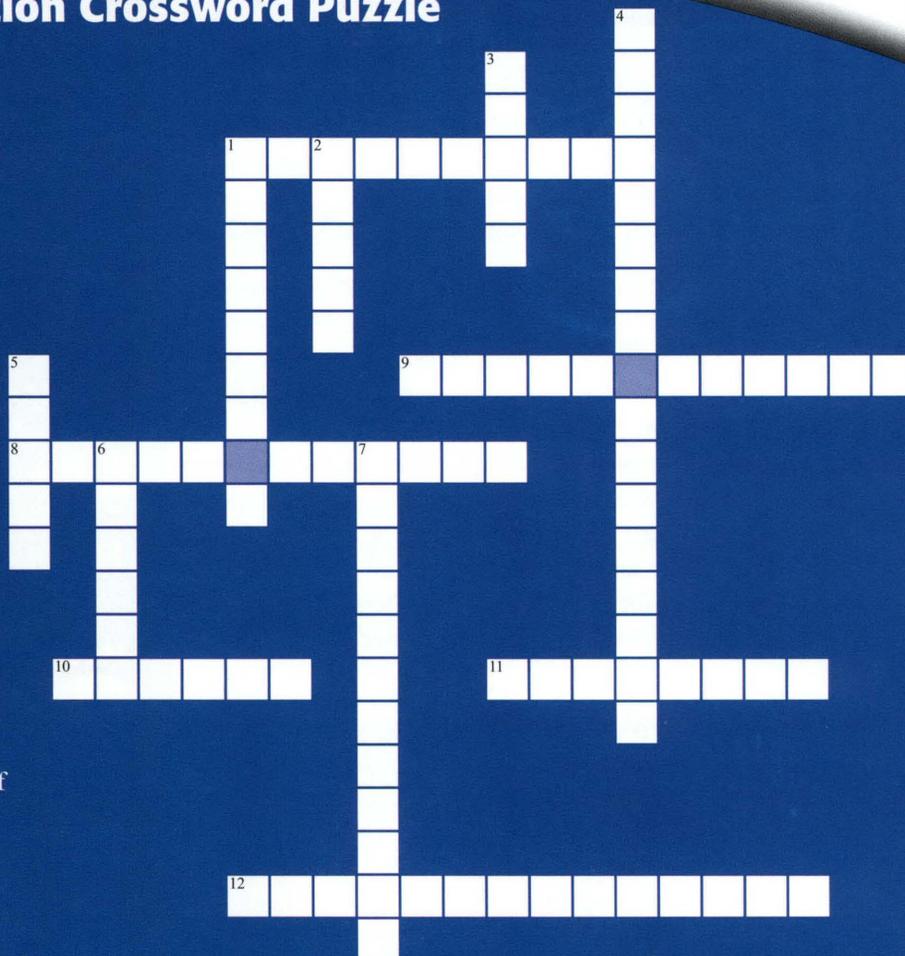
Nutrition Crossword Puzzle

Across

- 1 – Lots of these come into season in August.
- 8 – You should eat at least 3 servings of these a day.
- 9 – Adopt healthy habits to reduce your risk of this disease.
(2 words)
- 10 – ____ your intake of saturated fats to reduce your risk of colon cancer.
- 11 – Waste and ____ from insects cause food to become unsafe.
- 12 – Fiber and ____ help protect the colon from damage by harmful chemicals that may be found in food.

Down

- 1 – Your body needs this for good eyesight and healthy skin. (2 words)
- 2 – Choose to eat a dark ____ vegetable each day.
(2 words)
- 3 – This helps to keep bowel movements regular.
- 4 – Getting regular ____ will help you stay healthy and fit. (2 words)
- 5 – Eat ____ high-fat foods to reduce your risk of colon cancer.
- 6 – Choose to eat a deep ____ vegetable each day.
- 7 – Vegetables are high in ____ that help to fight many diseases and conditions.



Answer Key:

Across:

- 1 - vegetables
- 8 - whole grains
- 9 - colon cancer
- 10 - reduce
- 11 - bacteria
- 12 - phytonutrients

Down:

- 1 - vitamin A
- 2 - green
- 3 - fiber
- 4 - physical activity
- 5 - fewer
- 6 - orange
- 7 - antioxidants

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Stamp Program.**

The Food Stamp Program provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. Call this toll-free number, 1-800-552-3431 (M-F 8:15-5:00, except holidays), to learn how to apply for food stamps and to get other useful information about services.

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