Herkimer County Living

Cornell Cooperative Extension Herkimer County

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"Take My Hand"

You take my hand
and I'll take yours,
and we'll start out today.

For a helping hand
is what we need
to guide us along the way.

The way to a goal is a lonely road.
We need someone to care.
Reach out, my friend,
and take my hand,
and then we're almost there.

Source: Unknown

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ANSWER CORNER: ARE YOU STORING FOOD SAFELY?

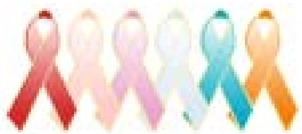
Whether putting food in the refrigerator or the freezer, you have plenty of opportunities to prevent foodborne illnesses. Keeping foods chilled at proper temperatures is one of the best ways to prevent or slow the growth of bacteria.

- **Refrigerate or freeze perishables right away.** Foods that require refrigeration should be put in the refrigerator as soon as you get them home. Stick to the "two-hour rule" for leaving items needing refrigeration out at room temperature. Never allow meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, or produce or other foods that require refrigeration to sit at room temperature for more than two hours - one hour if the air temperature is above 90°F. This also applies to items such as leftovers, "doggie bags," and take-out foods. Also, when putting food away, don't crowd the refrigerator or freezer so tightly that air can't circulate.
- **Keep your appliances at the proper temperatures.** Keep the refrigerator temperature at or below 40°F. The freezer temperature should be 0°F. Appliance thermometers are the best way of knowing these temperatures and are generally inexpensive. Place one in your refrigerator and one in your freezer, in the front in an easy-to-read location. Check the temperature regularly-at least once a week.
- **Check storage directions on labels.** Many items other than meats, vegetables, and dairy products need to be kept cold. For instance, mayonnaise and ketchup should go in the refrigerator after opening. If you've neglected to properly refrigerate something, it's usually best to throw it out.
- **Use ready-to-eat foods as soon as possible.** Refrigerated ready-to-eat foods such as luncheon meats should be used as soon as possible. The longer they're stored in the refrigerator, the more chance Listeria, a bacterium that causes foodborne illness, can grow, especially if the refrigerator temperature is above 40°F.
- **Be alert for spoiled food.** Anything that looks or smells suspicious should be thrown out. Mold is a sign of spoilage. It can grow even under refrigeration. Mold is not a major health threat, but it can make food unappetizing. The safest practice is to discard food that is moldy.
- **Marinate food in the refrigerator.** Bacteria can multiply rapidly in foods left to marinate at room temperature. Also, never reuse marinating liquid as a sauce unless you bring it to a rapid boil first.
- **Clean the refrigerator regularly and wipe spills immediately.** This helps reduce the growth of Listeria bacteria and prevents drips from thawing meat that can allow bacteria from one food to spread to another. Clean the fridge out frequently.
- **Keep foods covered.** Store refrigerated foods in covered containers or sealed storage bags, and check leftovers daily for spoilage. Store eggs in their carton in the refrigerator itself rather than on the door, where the temperature is warmer.
- **Check expiration dates.** If food is past its "use by" date, discard it. If you're not sure or if the food looks questionable, throw it out.
- **Food that is properly handled and stored in the freezer at 0° F will remain safe.** While freezing does not kill most bacteria, it does stop bacteria from growing. Though food will be safe indefinitely at 0°F, quality will decrease the longer the food is in the freezer. Tenderness, flavor, aroma, juiciness, and color can all be affected. Leftovers should be stored in tight containers. With commercially frozen foods, it's important to follow the cooking instructions on the package to assure safety.
- **Freezer burn does not mean food is unsafe.** It appears as grayish-brown leathery spots on frozen food and can occur when food is not securely wrapped in air-tight packaging, and causes dry spots in foods. Although not unsafe, freezer burn does cause flavor and quality loss. If area is small, you can trim freezer-burned sections before cooking. Heavily freezer-burned foods should be discarded since flavor and texture will be poor.

Source: U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Consumer Update, 7/21/08

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

September Health & Nutrition Forum
"Reducing Cancer Risks"



This forum will look at ways you can reduce your risk of cancer through the choices you make about food, physical activity, and weight management. Come and learn more.

Speakers .... Peter M. Cittadino, American Cancer Society Community Executive Director, Mohawk Valley Office

Karen Miller, RN OCN, Cancer Program Education Coordinator, Faxton-St. Luke's Healthcare Regional Cancer Center

When............................ Wednesday, September 24, 2008, 3:30 to 5:00 PM

Where .... Basloe Library, Main Street, Herkimer

To Register.................... Please call Cornell Cooperative Extension of Herkimer County at 866-7920

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October Health & Nutrition Forum
"Can You Afford to Eat Right?"

Come and learn how to revamp your shopping and eating habits for good health and stretch your food dollars at the same time. Learn practical ways to make better food choices that still taste good.

Speaker .... Bonnie Pawlick, RD, CDN, Lutheran Care

When ....Wednesday, October 22, 2008, 3:30 to 5:00 PM

Where .... Basloe Library, Main Street, Herkimer

To Register .... Please call Cornell Cooperative Extension of Herkimer County at 866-7920

All Forums are free and open to the public.

CCE office hours have returned to:

8:30 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday
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Ideas from Nutrition Staff

WARM UP TO WINTER WITH ROOT VEGETABLES

An incredible array of vegetables are available in your supermarket in later summer, fall and early winter.

Most vegetables are low in calories, high in fiber, vitamins and minerals that help protect our bodies.

Vegetables taste great when using low fat cooking methods like steaming, stir-frying or sautéing. Season with herbs and spices to reduce the use of oil, sauces and salt.

Carrots are rich in vitamin A. Look for smooth, firm ones. Store in a plastic bag in a refrigerator (away from apples which will make them taste bitter.) Grate into salads, steam, boil, microwave, add to stir-fry, casseroles, stews or soup or eat raw.

Celery root is a knobby brown root of a special celery variety. Look for small and firm roots that are heavy for their size. Refrigerate up to 10 days. Peel off the knobby skin and enjoy this vegetable that tastes like celery and parsley - baked, sautéed or boiled. It can be pureed and mixed with mash potatoes.

Parsnips look like white carrots and have a sweet and nutty flavor. Look for small to medium size parsnips. They can be refrigerated up to 2 weeks in a plastic bag. Boil and mash like potatoes; steam and add to soups and stews or roasts with rosemary and olive oil. Swap this vegetable in recipes that call for their cousin the carrot.

Rutabagas look like a turnip. They have yellow flesh that is firm and slightly sweet. Look for hard, smooth and heavy rutabagas. Boil and mash with potatoes. They also can be substituted for turnips in recipes, or added to beef or lamb stew.

Turnips are a great addition to soup, stew, roast and stir-fry. Add raw turnips to salads. Select turnips that still have their leafy greens attached. You can sauté the greens with garlic and serve as a side dish. Turnips are white with a tinge of purple at the top. Look for small ones that are heavy for their size. They will be sweeter and won't have a woody texture or peppery bite.

Potatoes can be baked, boiled, fried, mashed or steamed. There are some 100 varieties, but most fall into one of 5 types: russet, white, round, red and sweet. The type of potato you choose should be based on how you are preparing it. Select potatoes that are firm and heavy for their size. Avoid any that are shriveled or have cuts, are blemished, decayed or have green discoloration under the skin. When purchasing sweet potatoes look for the medium size, thick potato that tapers toward the ends. The darker the skin, the sweeter and moister it will be. It is best to store all potatoes in a cool, dry, dark and will ventilated place, NOT a refrigerator. Before using, scrub and rinse well. If you're not going to use peeled and cut potatoes immediately, cover with cold water to prevent them from darkening.

For a winter treat try this recipe:

Roasted Turnip and Potatoes

2 pounds turnips (about 4 medium sized)
1-1/2 pounds red potatoes (about 4 medium)
3 Tablespoons olive oil
3/4 teaspoon dried rosemary
1/2 teaspoon black pepper

Position racks in upper and lower thirds of oven; preheat oven to 450°F. Peel turnips. Cut turnips and potatoes into 1-inch pieces; toss olive oil, rosemary, and black pepper in a large bowl. Transfer vegetables to two large baking sheets and spread in a single layer. Roast vegetables on baking sheets, stirring every 10 minutes. Rotate and switch baking sheets between upper and lower racks, halfway through cooking time, until veggies are browned and softened, about 30 minutes. Transfer to a serving bowl and serve hot.

Yield: 8 servings; serving size: 1 cup (140 calories, 6 grams fat, 0 grams trans fat, 4 grams fiber, 80 mg sodium)

***Vary the vegetables.** Roasting caramelizes vegetables and brings out their flavor so try different ones in this recipe. Add parsnips, carrots, beets or onions, for example. Cut the vegetables into uniform sizes and stir often for even cooking.

Shared by: Mary Ann Walrath, Nutrition Staff

See more ideas on the use of root vegetables on page 5.

WARM UP TO WINTER WITH ROOT VEGETABLES (*continued)*

We need 1 to 2.5 cups of orange vegetables each week. Options include carrots, sweet potatoes and winter squash. Here are some ideas:

Cranberry Pumpkin Muffins

Use winter squash in quick breads. Using applesauce and egg whites reduced cholesterol and fat.

1-1/2 cups flour
1/2 cup quick oats
3/4 cup sugar
1 Tablespoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon allspice
3/4 teaspoon cinnamon
2 Tablespoons vegetable oil
2 egg whites
1/3 cup unsweetened applesauce
1 cup pumpkin
1 cup dried cranberries

Preheat oven to 400ºF. Stir together dry ingredients and set aside. Beat oil, egg whites, applesauce and pumpkin together until well blended. Add the pumpkin mixture to the dry ingredients all at once. Stir until moistened (batter will be thick). Fold in cranberries. Fill paper lined muffin cups (or spray with non-stick cooking spray). Bake for 25 to 30 minutes.

Yield: 12 muffins, serving size one muffin (182 calories, 2.7 grams fat, 0 grams trans fat, 2 grams fiber, 230 mg sodium)

Autumn Black and Gold

A meatless main dish featuring butternut squash.

1 small butternut squash
1 teaspoon vegetable oil
1 small chopped onion
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1/4 cup red wine vinegar
1/4 cup water
2 – 16 oz. cans black beans, rinsed and drained
1/2 teaspoon oregano

Heat the squash in the microwave on high heat for 1-2 minutes to soften the skin. Carefully peel the squash with a vegetable peeler or small knife; remove seeds. Cut squash into 1/2-inch cubes. In a large pan, heat the oil. Add the chopped onion, garlic powder, and squash. Cook for 5 minutes on medium heat. Add vinegar and water. Cook squash on low heat until tender, about 10 minutes. Add beans and oregano. Cook until heated through.

Yield: 6 servings, serving size: 1 cup (120 calories, 1 g fat, 0 grams trans fat, 8 grams fiber, 270 mg sodium)

Stuffed Butternut Squash

This side dish recipe combines squash with apples, red onions and pecans.

2 baking apples, cored and diced
1/2 red onion, diced
3 Tablespoons apple juice concentrate
1 Tablespoon pecan pieces, coarsely chopped
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1 butternut squash, cut in half lengthwise, seeds removed

Preheat the oven to 350ºF. Toss the diced apples with the onion, apple juice concentrate, pecans and cinnamon. Prepare the butternut squash halves and place into a large baking dish. Pour about ¼ inch of water into the bottom of the baking dish. Place a generous amount of stuffing into the cavity and down the center of each squash half. Cover with foil and bake for 50-60 minutes. Squash are done when fork tender.

Yield: 4 serving, serving size: 1/4 squash (89 calories, 1 grams fat, 0 trans fat, 3 grams fiber, 4 mg sodium)

Sweet Squash Pudding

Use winter squash for a low-fat dessert.

12 oz. frozen winter squash, thawed
2/3 cup fat-free cottage cheese
1/2 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice or cinnamon
2 egg whites
1/4 cup skim milk
1/4 cup brown sugar
1/2 teaspoon vanilla

Combine all ingredients in a blender until smooth. Pour into a 1.5 quart casserole dish and bake at 375ºF for 45 minutes, until center is set. Serve warm or chilled.

Yield: 6 servings, serving size: 1/2 cup (69 calories, .5 grams fat, 0 trans fat, 1.5 grams fiber, 118 mg sodium)

Source: Iowa State University Extension, Food For Fitness and Fun newsletter, October 2007

TIPS TO EASE THE BOTTOM LINE AT THE GROCERY STORE

The Department of Agriculture is predicting a 4 to 5 percent rise in food prices this year. The search for a bargain may seem to force shoppers to look less at healthier choices and more at the bottom line in search of bargains.

However, there are ways to benefit your health and your pocketbook. Here are some ideas:

$ **Make a list and stick to it.** With a list, you are less likely to buy on impulse. You'll also save by avoiding extra gas-guzzling trips back to the store when you've forgotten something you need. Keep a running list of what you need. Go over the weekly grocery ads when they come out, and with your running list, it's quick and easy to finalize what you need.

$ **Shop the specials.** Canned goods have a long shelf life.

$ **Buy on sale and stock up.** If you have room in your freezer or pantry to store extra food, stock up on sale items.

$ **Buy seasonal vegetables and fruits.** Buy only what you'll use - fresh produce has a short shelf life. Be creative with your produce if it's nearing the end of its shelf life. If the bananas get too ripe, for example, make banana bread. We lose money when we have to toss food because it was left too long and ends up in the garbage.

$ **Avoid shopping when you're hungry.** You'll likely wind up putting "extras" in your grocery cart and eventually on your waist line if you get a snack attack. If you aren't sure you spend much on snacks, try keeping a tally of all the snack foods you buy in one week. It may surprise you how much you are spending.

$ **Shop alone.** Leave the kids and other family members at home. Too many "gotta haves" can drive up the total grocery bill in a hurry.

$ **Use coupons for items you typically buy.** You can find coupons in newspaper ads and online, too. Keep your list on the back of an envelope and tuck the coupons inside where they're easy to retrieve at check out. If the grocery store you frequent has double or triple coupon days, take advantage of it.

$ **If you don't already have a store discount card, sign up.**

$ **Plan meals ahead and try planning your meals around sale items.** Not only does this help with making the grocery list, but it also helps you plan leftovers for lunches, which saves money over going out to lunch. Leftovers also can be used for a quick dinner when your time is limited and you may be tempted to grab fast food instead. Knowing in advance you can count on leftovers also keeps you from overbuying foods which have a limited shelf life. Remember to check expiration dates.

$ **Choose less processed food and cook from scratch more often.** Cooking from scratch is better from both your health and budget. Processed food is often high in sodium, fat and calories. A recent study showed that more than half of consumers are buying fewer prepared meals and cooking more often from scratch.

$ **Buy food in bulk when it's cost effective.** Use unit pricing, listed on the shelf tag along with the overall item price. It may be cheaper to buy larger quantities of some foods. If you want smaller packages of food for convenience, repackage them at home in smaller bags. But check your prices carefully; sometimes the bigger size isn't a bargain.

$ **Consider store brands.** Name brands are found at eye-level which is prime real estate in the grocery aisle. Look for store brands on the lower and higher shelves often for less money.

Source: Colorado State University Extension, news release 7/3/08

For more information plan to attend the October Health & Nutrition Forum "Can You Afford to Eat Right?" See page 3 for details.

LAUNDRY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Laundry practices that save water, reduce energy and release fewer pollutants into the environment are good for the planet ... and good for your wallet. Here are some tips to put you on the right path.

Washing Well

Stain treatment. Pretreat or presoak stains and heavy soils before washing to get the best stain removal without using extra hot water or rewashing.

Load size. A full load is the most energy-efficient use of your washing machine. If that's not practical, adjust the water level to correspond to the size of your load.

Detergent amount. Read and follow the label directions for the recommended dosage of detergent. Heavily soiled loads or hard water may require slightly more than the recommended amount. Slightly less than the recommended amount can be used in soft water or for lightly soiled loads. Measure, don't guess!

Detergent type. "Ultra" detergents are concentrated detergents in liquid or powder form. They come in smaller packages, yet are designed to offer the same cleaning power as similar products in larger packages. You'll need less ultra detergent than with an unconcentrated product, so follow label instructions and use the measuring cap or scoop that comes with the product.

Water temperature. Heating water eats up energy, so, whenever possible, switch to the warm – or, even better, the cold setting. If your hot water supply is limited, start with the hot-water-wash loads, then follow with warm, then cold. Rinse all loads in cold water.

Water re-use. If your washer has a water-return system, re-use the wash water for additional loads. Start with hot water, lightly soiled items and the recommended amount of detergent. Add more detergent for each additional load.

High Efficiency (HE) washing machines. If you're in the market for a new washing machine, HE washers are designed to provide major savings when compared to traditional agitator machines.

- They use less water – from 20% to 66% less.
- They use less energy – from 20% to 50% less because there is much less water to heat.
- They extract more water from the clothes, which reduces drying time.

Unlike traditional agitator washers, most HE washers use a "tumbler" system with no agitator. In a front-loading HE washer, the laundry tumbles back and forth as the tub rotates clockwise, then counterclockwise. In a top-loading HE washer, a gentle combination of spinning, rotating and/or wobbling wheels, plates or disks are used to move the items as they are cleaned.

For best cleaning performance, use only HE detergents in an HE washing machine. They're formulated to be low-sudsing and quick-dispersing. Using a "traditional" detergent in an HE washer creates an excess of suds, which can interfere with the tumbling action and redeposit soil onto clean clothes.

Drying Expertise

In the world of clothes dryers, there is no equivalent to the HE dryer for energy savings. However, if you're in the market for a new one, be sure it has a moisture sensor that automatically shuts off the machine when clothes are dry. There are also some simple guidelines to follow for maximum energy efficiency.

- ✓ **Dry full loads.** Just don't overdo it – you want air to be able to circulate around the clothes.
- ✓ **Utilize retained heat.** Drying two loads (or more) in a row will cut down on individual drying time.
- ✓ **Be lint-free.** To improve drying efficiency, clean the lint filter before each load.
- ✓ **Air-dry.** Not everything has to go in the dryer.

Source: The Soap and Detergent Association, Cleaning Matters newsletter, July/August 2008

THE HEALTH REVOLUTION

When it comes to health and hygiene, the good old days weren't so good. This point is vividly brought home by the information contained in Against Disease, a book recently published by The Soap and Detergent Association and available at www.againstdisease.com.

Here are a few gems that will make your bathwater curdle:

- Europe, during the Middle Ages, went a thousand years without a bath.
- As the centuries progressed, even children in Western Europe, including those of the well-to-do, were not bathed.
- Records show that King Louis XIII had his legs washed for the first time at age five and had his first bath at age seven.
- In the U.S., in the early part of the 1800s, city streets were used for disposal of food wastes and dishwater, as well as being covered with horse manure. In most cities, free-roaming animals, usually pigs, scavenged the garbage.
- In 1837, average life expectancy in Manchester (a manufacturing center) was age 38 for professional persons, gentry and their families; age 17 for mechanics, laborers, servants and their families. Surviving childbirth was simply the first health hurdle in a short life span.
- In London, in 1842, there were reports of houses with "cellars full of night soil, to a depth of three feet that had been permitted for years to accumulate from the overflow of cesspools."
- In the mid-1800s, smallpox, scarlet fever, measles and diphtheria were so common that people regarded them as necessary features of childhood.
- During this same time, in Paris and Brussels, people could "hire" a warm bath in their own homes. Entrepreneurs provided portable bathtubs and hot water. The tubs were carried in a cart from the bathing establishment to the home, and then carted away again.
- Sanitarians – people who tried to introduce reforms in the mid-1800s – believed, quite mistakenly, that disease was caused by "miasmas" (smelly emissions from decaying organic matter).

The Hygiene Barrier

Developments that began in the late 19th century and continue today have helped to give us the freedom to experience our lives without the impediments of debilitating diseases or the tragedy of premature death. Here are just a few of these significant developments:

- **Vaccines.** Today, vaccines successfully control whooping cough, measles, diphtheria, rubella and polio. With no case of naturally occurring smallpox detected anywhere in the world since October 1977, the disease has been officially declared eliminated.

- **Soap production and use.** In 1833, reformers in England convinced the government to reduce the soap tax. By 1853, it was eliminated. As a result, the domestic use of soap increased from 3.6 pounds per person in 1801 to 8 pounds in 1861. By 1937, the number had grown to 20 pounds per person.

- **Running water.** The big transformation in personal hygiene didn't occur until running water could be provided to homes from municipal treatment and distribution systems. Along with water-heating devices, plumbing, baths and sinks, building improvements and drainage systems, running water permitted the installation of true bathrooms in middle-class homes and the prospering labor classes.

The hygienic quality of our environment dramatically reduces routine exposures to pathogenic organisms. However, along with this reduction to exposure, susceptibility to many disease-causing organisms has increased. Therefore, it's important to continually look for ways of improving and maintaining high levels of hygiene.

Source: The Soap and Detergent Association, Cleaning Matters newsletter, July/August 2008

THREE HABITS FOR HIGHLY EFFECTIVE WEIGHT LOSS

With over two-thirds of American adults overweight or obese, many people are searching for ways to lose weight – and possibly decrease the risk of cancer at the same time. According to some recently-published studies, the key to shedding pounds and keeping them off may lie in our everyday habits. Here are three behavioral strategies that may help:

Pick Up a Pen: Tracking what you eat in a food diary can lead to shedding more pounds, according to a study published in the August *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. In the study, approximately 1,700 participants were asked to restrict calories, exercise at moderate intensity levels, attend group sessions, and follow a diet high in fruit and vegetables aimed at stopping hypertension (the DASH diet). After six months, more than two-thirds of the participants lost at least nine pounds. The biggest weight loss was experienced by those who kept the most extensive food records every week. Other behaviors associated with increased weight loss include more minutes spent exercising and attending group sessions.

Avoid Weekend Pitfalls: Does this sound like you? Weekdays it's a healthy pattern of calorie-cutting and exercising: weekends, not so much. This pattern, according to a study published in the August issue of *Obesity*, may be the reason behind your slower-than-expected weight loss. In the study, 48 adults were assigned to two groups for a year – one group that restricted calories, and one that exercised daily. Daily weight changes, calorie intake, and activity levels were measured for weekends and weekdays. During weekdays, both groups were burning more calories than they were consuming, which leads to weight loss. Yet on weekends, both groups ate more calories compared to weekday consumption and the exercise group was less active, which prevented them from losing weight.

Integrate Small Changes: Whether it's adding one more vegetable or another hundred steps to your day, a new study suggests that focusing on small, cumulative changes can make significant differences in weight loss and maintenance. Published in the *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, the study compared weight loss and maintenance between a standard weight loss group, and a group that selected healthful, small changes that would fit into the individuals' lives. Both groups received the same amount of time with counselors and exercise training programs over the course of four months. After another three months of no meetings, the small-change group kept significantly more weight off than the standard-diet group.

A Healthy Weight for Health

The record numbers of overweight people today come at a time when the evidence linking excess body fat to cancer risk is stronger than ever before. American Institute for Cancer Research's expert report found that carrying excess body fat is convincingly associated to an increased risk of six types of cancer, including pancreatic, colorectal, and post-menopausal breast cancer.

Yet while the end goal of reaching a healthy weight may be the same, nutritionists agree there is no one correct way to reach that goal. In the struggle to lose weight, every individual faces their own unique motivators and barriers. Not every weight loss strategy will work for every person, but experimenting with different behavioral approaches allows you to find the one(s) that best suits your needs.

Source: American Institute for Cancer Research, e.Newsletter, August 2008

For more information, plan to attend the September Health & Nutrition Forum "Reducing Cancer Risks." See page 3 for details.

Even Start Corner

GETTING INVOLVED IN YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION

As the new school year begins, set a goal to make a difference in your child's education.

Children of all ages benefit greatly when parents take an active role. When parents become a partner in their children's education, their children do better in school, enjoy learning, and develop confidence in themselves.

1) Make your home a good place to learn.

- 🕮 Set aside a quiet time.
- 🕮 Make a study center.
- 🕮 Have and maintain clear rules about study time.
- 🕮 Learn about different study techniques.
- 🕮 Help with homework.
- 🕮 Read together everyday.
- 🕮 Be available for questions and support.
- 🕮 Use your public library for resource materials.

2) Build good relationships with your child's teachers, counselors, principals, and other staff members. Take part in school activities.

- 🕮 Schedule and attend open house.
- 🕮 Make parent conferences a priority.
- 🕮 Join the parent teacher organization.
- 🕮 Stay in touch.
- 🕮 Volunteer.
- 🕮 Attend school functions.

3) Encourage and support your child with praise and guidance.

- 🕮 Help your child become independent.
- 🕮 Always speak positively about school.
- 🕮 Set goals together.
- 🕮 Be a positive role model.
- 🕮 Talk often and spend time with your child.

Best wishes for a happy and healthy school year!!!

Even Start is not recommending a "Book of the Month" this issue, but rather asking families to start the school year off by visiting their local library together. Your librarian is a great resource person for books and information to help you and your child prepare for a successful, productive, and positive school year.

What to look for when searching for educational support books:

- 🕮 A book you feel comfortable with
- 🕮 A book that is sensitive to the subject you are dealing with
- 🕮 A book that answers questions in easy, straight forward manner.
- 🕮 Art or photos that capture the idea and feelings you would like to convey to a child.
- 🕮 A book that will not frighten off a child who is struggling with a particular issue or subject.

"Potato Print Bookmark"

Materials needed:

potato
tempera paint
thick colored paper cut to 2" x 9"
paring knife
foil

Slice the potato in half. Make a simple raised design on the flat side of one half of the potato. Curve away those parts you don't want to print by slicing down and then across with the knife. Let the potato dry for an hour or more to help the paint adhere better. Dip the potato into the paint placed on the foil. Position the potato on the paper and press down firmly. Put more paint on the potato after every one or two prints. Use the same potato to make different types of patterns.

Shared by: Rebecca Benson, Even Start Program

HEAVY BACKPACKS MEAN CHRONIC BACK PAIN

With the beginning of school, one thing that is often overlooked by parents and children alike are backpacks.

Backpacks are a convenient way to transport a load of books and school supplies between the classroom and home. However, a backpack that is too heavy, or worn improperly, can put children at risk for neck, back and shoulder pain, posture problems, as well as muscle and joint injuries.

"The average student carries a backpack that is too heavy for them, weighing approximately 25 percent of their weight," says Dr. Margaret Harris, extension health specialist with the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture. "A third of students carry backpacks that are more than 33 percent of their weight."

According to the American Physical Therapy Association, postural changes among students are magnified when the backpack is more than 10 percent to 15 percent of the students' body weight. Injuries occur when a student uses flawed postures to adapt to a heavy load. Postures such as arching the back, bending forward, twisting or leaning to one side may cause improper spine alignment and interfere with the functioning of disks that provide shock absorption.

"Backpacks that are too heavy can cause chronic back pain," Harris said. "In one study, six out of 10 students reported chronic back pain related to heavy backpacks."

There are a few guidelines for safe backpack use, suggested by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP):

- Wear both shoulder straps to distribute the weight evenly.
- Pack lightly. The backpack should never weigh more than 10 percent to 15 percent of the student's body weight.
- Organize the backpack so the heaviest items are closest to the back.
- Wear backpacks close to the body, over the strongest back muscles. The straps should be tightened so the backpack rests two inches above the waist.

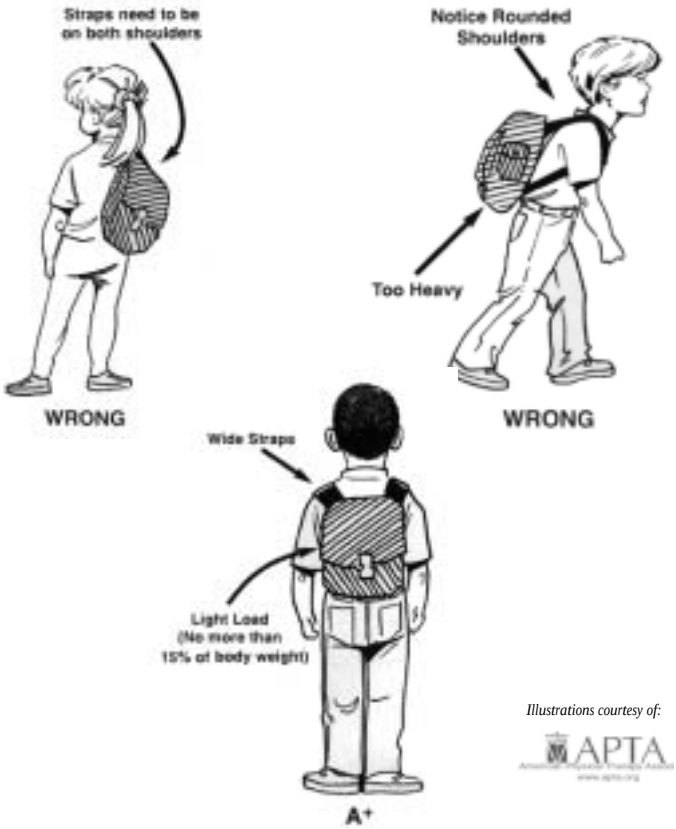
The AAP also suggests a few criteria when shopping for a new backpack. Look for backpacks that have:

- Wide, padded shoulder straps instead of narrow straps, which can hinder circulation.
- A padded back, to reduce pressure and enhance comfort.
- A waist strap, which can help distribute the weight of the backpack more evenly.

Parents should be aware of how heavy their child's backpack is and whether their child is at risk for injury. If the student experiences pain, tingling or numbness in the arms or changes posture while wearing the backpack, the backpack is too heavy.

"A good slogan to follow is 'pack it light, wear it right,'" Harris said.

Source:eXtension.org news release August 5, 2008



Illustrations courtesy of:

APTA

SAVING FOR THE FUTURE

Higher gas and fuel prices are making it harder for Americans to do something they're not too keen on anyway - saving for the future. Even before the recent economic slowdown and spike in commodity prices squeezed household budgets, Americans were spending too much by many measures. The national savings rate has hovered just above 0% in recent years, even as a generation of baby boomers quickly approach retirement. The rate was more than 10% as recently as the 1980s.

These tips can help cut monthly bills, but financial advisers say permanently cutting spending and increasing savings also requires a shift in attitude. By cutting back, you're not really giving up anything. The money you save will still be available for future needs. Plus, if given enough time to compound, those savings double and triple in value when invested properly - giving you even more to spend later.

Ramen in Retirement?

Financial planners often run analyses to demonstrate how overspending today makes it impossible to achieve dreams tomorrow - whether the goal is a major purchase, an early retirement, or an adequate income in retirement.

Save enough now so you can maintain the same standard of living throughout your life, planners say. To persuade clients to reduce expenses, planners also analyze exactly how the money is being spent - information surprisingly few initially grasp. People have an idea of how much they spend.

Match Goals to Spending

Everyone will choose to adjust their spending in different ways. But planners advise clients to make sure their spending is matching their goals and values. All you're doing is aligning your spending with what you think is really important to you.

The process of cutting spending really makes you look at what you want to get out of your life. With this perspective - thinking long-term and focused on what really matters to you - cutting expenses can be easier.

We are all in control of our spending. Controlling spending requires extra thought every time you open your wallet - being an educated, responsible consumer.

It can take some time to adjust to a tighter budget. Extra measures are usually needed to help people stick to a new spending regime. If you don't focus on it, it won't happen. Just as dieters need to step on the scale and tally up their calories and exercise each day, spenders must track expenses carefully.

Don't Neglect Essentials

A strict, formal budget is usually unnecessary. Set up special bank accounts, accessed through a debit card, out of which all discretionary purchases must be made. You are then forced to constantly monitor the account's balance and if you spend too much, you're immediately aware of it.

Is it possible to go overboard with the cost-cutting? You're cutting too much if you're neglecting essential needs. For example, you should never go without health insurance just to save money. Also, you don't want to be feeling like you're depriving yourself because then you're not going to stick to your goals. Set aside a little bit of money each week, perhaps $10 or $20, for small luxuries.

And that's the whole point of cutting spending: The goal is to save money now so you can continue enjoying your money - on both essential and frivolous expenses - for decades to come.

For more on saving tips, see:
http://images.businessweek.com/ss/08/08/0804_cheap/index.htm

Source: adapted from BusinessWeek.com special report, 8/4/08

CAFFEINE BOOST ENERGY AND SALES

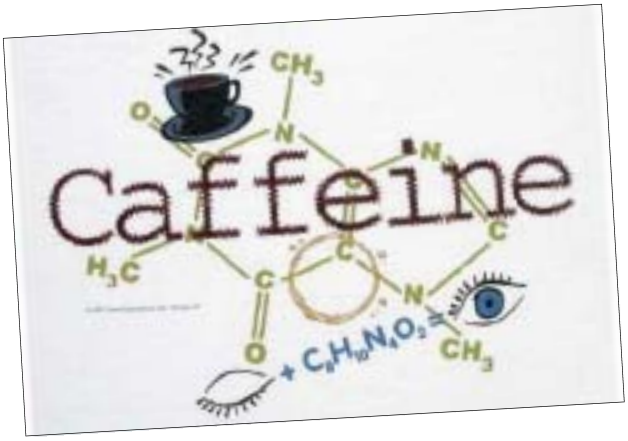
Caffeine is naturally occurring in the leaves, seeds or fruits of more than 63 plant species worldwide. Emperors long ago sipped hot tea, and in Africa, beans were used as money and consumed as food. Coffee and cocoa beans, kola nuts and tea leaves are the most common sources of caffeine.

Caffeine is added to soft drinks as a flavoring agent. It adds bitterness that modifies the flavors of other components, both sour and sweet, which contributes to the sensory appeal of soft drinks.

Moderate caffeine consumption is about 300 mg per day, or about three cups of coffee or about 60 ounces of caffeinated cola. In late March, the International Food Information Council Foundation (IFIC) released a review on caffeine that stated that moderate amounts of caffeine do not cause adverse health effects in healthy adults, although those with hypertension and the elderly may be more vulnerable. Abruptly discontinuing consumption of caffeine can lead to mild symptoms of headache, anxiety and insomnia.

Energy drinks are a growing beverage category popular with many different age groups, especially young adults. The IFIC points out that this is one category to monitor for consumption in coming years. Caffeine-infused drinks represent a 20% dollar sales gain year after year.

Food companies in the United States have introduced over 70 new food products with "energy" in the product description so far this year. Energy snacks are leading the way, followed by confectionery and breakfast cereals. A New York company introduced caffeine-infused snack chips in two different flavors that contain 140 mg of caffeine in each 1.5-ounce single serving bag. Last year, an Alabama-based food company introduced potato chips with a caution label "not recommended for pregnant or nursing women, young children or anyone who is sensitive to caffeine." The company won't disclose exactly how much caffeine is in the chips, but they say a 3.5-ounce bag is roughly the equivalent of drinking three and a half cups of brewed coffee.



Consumers can get their energy boost from supercharged seeds. Sunflower seeds infused with energy supplements, caffeine, taurine, lysine and ginseng hit the market in 2007 and now come in three new flavors including dill pickle, honey BBQ and salt and pepper. Candy bars have always provided a quick energy-fix, but one snack food company offers the single-serve "super-charged" candy bar with an added 60 mg of caffeine.

For the healthy adult population, moderate caffeine consumption of 300 mg per day is safe, but are we willing to stop there?

Source: Kathy Walsten, Department of Human Nutrition at Kansas State University, Nutrition News, July 2008

Caffeine Content Chart		**Milligrams of Caffeine**	
Item		Typical	Range*
coffee (8 oz. cup)	brewed, drip method	85	65-120
	instant	75	60-85
	decaffeinated	3	2-4
	espresso (1 oz. cup)	40	30-50
teas (8 oz. cup)	brewed, major U.S. brands	40	20-90
	brewed, imported brands	60	25-110
	instant	28	24-31
	iced	25	9-50
soft drinks (cola - 12-oz serving)		40	30-60
energy drinks (approx. 205 ml - 8.3-oz. serving)		80	50-160
cocoa beverage (8-oz. serving)		5	2-7
chocolate milk beverage (8-oz. serving)		5	2-7
solid milk chocolate (1-oz. serving)		6	1-15
solid dark chocolate, semi-sweet (1-oz. serving)		20	5-35
baker's chocolate (1-oz. serving)		26	26
chocolate flavored syrup (1-oz. serving)		4	4
**Due to brewing method, plant variety, brand, formulation, etc.*			
Source: IFIC Foundation, 1998, Knight, et al., 2004; Mayo Clinic, 2005			

VOTER REGISTRATION SCAMS

Have you received an unsolicited e-mail or phone call from someone who claims to represent your local election board or civic group and asks for your Social Security or credit card number to confirm your eligibility or registration to vote?

According to the Federal Trade Commission, the nation's consumer protection agency, scammers may send messages asking for your Social Security number or financial information supposedly to register you to vote – or to confirm your registration – when they really want to commit identity theft.

As a rule, federal officials say, organizations conducting legitimate voter registration drives either contact you in person or give you a voter registration form that you fill out yourself. They will never ask you to provide your financial information.

If you get an unsolicited phone call or e-mail from someone who claims to need your Social Security number or other personal or financial information to register you to vote, report it to the FTC online at www.ftc.gov, or by phone at 1-877-FTC-HELP. If you already have shared your personal information with someone you don't know, you may be the victim of a scam. File your complaint with the FTC, then visit www.ftc.gov/idtheft.

To register to vote – and to find out whether your state requires your Social Security number for registration – contact your local election office, or check the U.S. Election Assistance Commission's National Voter Registration Form at www.eac.gov/voter. Most states accept this form. Many states and localities have their own rules about how far before an election you must register to be able to vote, and whether a Social Security number is required.

Source: Federal Trade Commission, news release August 7, 2008

CRASH COURSE IN CUTTING BOARDS

A rule of thumb in safe food preparation is to be sure you don't cut raw meat, poultry or fish on the same surface without thoroughly cleaning it between uses. An even better idea is to have two cutting boards – one reserved for meat, poultry and fish, the other reserved for fruits, vegetables, etc.

The cutting-board surface is a matter of personal preference. Plastic boards are lighter in weight, but wood boards are kinder to your knives. Some people mistakenly believe that plastic boards are less likely to harbor bacteria than wood ones, but microbiologists at the University of Wisconsin's Food Research Institute discovered that this isn't true. In fact, wood seems to have some as-yet-unidentified agent that is inhospitable to bacteria. Good cleaning practices are essential for safe food preparation.

Cleaning Cutting Boards

No matter which surface you choose, it's essential to keep all cutting boards clean. Wash with hot, soapy water after each use. Rinse with clear water and air- or pat-dry with clean paper towels. Note that some nonporous cutting boards, including acrylic, plastic or glass, can also be washed in the dishwasher.

If the cutting board was used for uncooked meat, fish or poultry, sanitize it after cleaning with a solution of one tablespoon of liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of water. Flood the surface with the bleach solution and allow it to stand for several minutes. Rinse with clear water and air- or pat-dry with clean paper towels.

Source: The Soap and Detergent Association, Cleaning Matters

SAFETY TIPS HELP PREVENT HALLOWEEN HIDDEN DANGERS

Children around the country are eagerly anticipating the night when they will wear their favorite costume and search for fun and delicious treats. As Halloween creeps up, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) reminds parents and caregivers that when it comes to Halloween safety, there is no trick. Hidden dangers associated with costumes, treats, and decorations can be easily prevented, so that the holiday celebration is a real treat.

According to the CPSC, the most serious Halloween-related injuries involve burns from flammable costumes and decorations, including ignition from open flames, such as candles and Jack O'Lanterns. Other incidents have involved abrasions from sharp objects attached to masks or costumes.

Home-made costumes that are not flame resistant continue to be the major concern. When making a costume, parents need to use inherently flame-resistant fabrics, such as nylon and polyester. Also, they should avoid long-draped items that could cause an entanglement hazard.

Follow these safety tips to ensure this year's holiday is a safe one:

Costumes

- When purchasing costumes, masks, beards and wigs, look for flame-resistant fabrics such as nylon or polyester, or look for the label "Flame Resistant." Flame-resistant fabrics will resist burning and should extinguish quickly. To minimize the risk of contact with candles and other fire sources, avoid costumes made with flimsy materials and outfits with big, baggy sleeves or billowing skirts.
- Purchase or make costumes that are light, bright and clearly visible to motorists.
- For greater visibility during dusk and darkness, decorate or trim costumes with reflective tape that will glow in the beam of a car's headlights. Bags or sacks also should be light-colored or decorated with reflective tape. Reflective tape is usually available in hardware, bicycle and sporting goods stores.
- Children should carry flashlights to see and be seen.
- Costumes should fit well and not drag on the ground to guard against trips and falls.
- Children should wear well-fitting, sturdy shoes. Oversized high heels are not a good idea.
- Tie hats and scarves securely to prevent them from slipping over children's eyes and obstructing vision.
- If your child wears a mask, make sure it fits securely, provides adequate ventilation, and has eye holes large enough to allow full vision.
- Swords, knives and similar costume accessories should be made of soft, flexible materials.

Treats

- Warn children not to eat any treats until an adult has examined them carefully for evidence of tampering.
- Carefully examine any toys or novelty items received by trick-or-treaters under three years of age. Do not allow young children to have any items that are small enough to present a choking hazard or that have small parts or components that could separate during use and present a choking hazard.

Decorations

- Keep candles and Jack O' Lanterns away from landings and doorsteps where costumes could brush against the flame.
- Indoors, keep candles and Jack O' Lanterns away from curtains, decorations and other combustibles that could catch fire. Do not leave burning candles unattended.
- Remove obstacles from lawns, steps and porches when expecting trick-or-treaters.
- Indoors or outside, use only lights that have been tested for safety by a recognized testing laboratory, such as UL. Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections. Discard damaged sets.
- Don't overload extension cords.

Source: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, news release, 10/25/2007

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