

Make Every Bite Count...More Fruits & Veggies

June 2007

Summer is the perfect time to celebrate our garden's bounty. Farmer's Markets and farm-stands are packed with a wonderful array of tasty, sun kissed fruits and vegetables!

While experts agree that eating a wide variety of fruits and veggies daily can help maintain a healthy weight and protect us from a number of chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer & high blood pressure, children often turn up their nose when it comes to fresh produce.

So how much do kids really need to eat each day and how can parents include these important foods in their family's meals & snacks? Adults need to eat between 4-6 cups of fruits and veggies each day while children 5-18years of age need 3-5 cups daily. Amounts needed vary based on age, gender and activity level. To determine the cups of fruits and veggies you need to eat daily go to www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov . This Centers for Disease Control web site has a calculator for you to use to determine your personal recommended intake as well as recipes and tips for increasing how many fruits and veggies you eat. While this may seem like a lot—it really isn't too hard to meet the recommendations if you're careful to include fruits and veggies at each meal.

So how can parents include more fruits and veggies in their family's meals and get kid's to eat them?? Try some of the following suggestions from Coulee Region Childhood Obesity Coalition members...

For breakfast...

- Top their waffles or pancakes with crushed berries rather than syrup
- Include leftover or chopped veggies in their scrambled eggs
- Fold grated carrots or zucchini into their favorite muffin or pancake batter
- Make a smoothie for them with fresh fruit, skim milk and orange juice

For lunch...

- Add lettuce and sliced veggies such as peppers, carrots, cucumbers or thinly sliced zucchini to their sandwiches
- Offer them a microwaved potato topped with grated cheese and fresh chopped veggies mixed with low fat dressing
- Slice up 6-7 pieces of fresh seasonal fruit, mix in a small amount of orange juice and serve with vanilla yogurt
- Add fresh chopped veggies to their favorite pasta or potato salad. Try adding lightly steamed green beans, red or green peppers, peas, shredded carrots or cherry tomatoes

For dinner...

- Offer them a salad with their evening meal. Ask them to determine what veggies you use
- Offer 1 cooked vegetable with their evening meal—again giving them choices to pick from.
- Marinate chopped fresh veggies in their favorite Italian dressing

- Stir fry meat and veggies together & serve it to them over pasta
- Try baking a pizza on the grill. Use a prepared crust and top with lots of fresh veggies, cheese and chopped fresh basil or oregano
- Top store bought or home made angel-food cake with sliced fruit mixed with berries for dessert

For snacks...

Create a snack section in the fridge so your kids can grab a healthy snack when they're in a hurry. In it keep...

- Your own trail mix made with dried fruit, pretzels, cereal & bite size graham crackers
- Bite size cut up veggies in a plastic bag or covered container with containers of low fat dip
- Cut up fresh fruit in a covered container
- Individual containers of applesauce or sliced fruit

Freeze grapes, banana slices or berries for a tasty & refreshing cool treat!

Coulee Region Turn off the TV Challenge

Turn Off the TV...Turn on Your Life!

April 2007

Are you worried that your family spends too much time in front of the TV, playing video games or chatting on line? Then join Coulee Region Childhood Obesity Coalition members and become part of the ***Coulee Region Turn Off the TV Challenge*** April 23rd – 29th. During the challenge week, families are being challenged to turn off their TVs and exercise their both minds and their bodies by finding healthier alternatives. Rather than coming home from school or work and plunking down in front of the TV, coalition members are encouraging challenge participants to enjoy their free time by reading a book, going on a picnic, walking or biking with a friend or listening (and dancing!) to their favorite music. The possibilities are limitless! Turning off the TV, video game or computer frees up time to spend with friends, family or enjoying favorite pastimes.

Why turn off the TV and reduce your screen time? Consider the following statistics from the Center for Screen-Time Awareness:

- The average child spends more time in front of the TV (1,023 hours) than in school (900 hours)
- Rather than talk with one another, 40% of families frequently or always watch TV during dinner.
- For every hour of TV each day a child watches, their risk of developing attention related problems later increases by 10%. For example, if a child watches 3 hours of TV each day, that child is 30% more likely to develop attention deficit disorder. (*Pediatrics*, 2004)

This challenge will help Coulee Region families stay healthy and strong. It's a great way to encourage healthy habits and build a healthy mind as well as a healthy body.

Mom Do I Look Fat?

February 2007

Have you heard your son or daughter say this? Maybe you have asked this question of others. Dieting and calorie counting are currently an epidemic in our culture and as a result, disordered eating has become a public health issue that demands attention. What most of us are wondering, including our children, is whether we are OK. Children and adults in our culture question if they can be themselves and still fit into our culture. Living in a climate that glorifies thinness and devalues overweight children has wreaked havoc on their self-esteem and body image, and created an environment that encourages children and adolescents to engage in unhealthy weight altering activities. 70-80% of adolescent girls say they are unhappy with their bodies and describe themselves as fat and as a result they engage in unhealthy dieting practices in hopes of feeling better.

Is there any place they can go and feel that they are listened to and truly accepted for who they are? HOME can be that safe place away from judgment and ridicule.

The following are our ways to promote body confidence in your home:

- When a child or teen announces a decision to change their eating, always ask why. Listen for any ulterior motive that is not food-related, such as "So I'll have more friends," or "So I'll do better in school."
- Challenge yourself for 24 hours not to comment on anyone's (including yourself) weight, size, appearance and eating habits. There is so much more to talk about.
- Guide children to follow their own body's signals for when, what and how much to eat. Teach them to say "no, thanks" to food that is offered when they're not hungry.
- Offer consistent balanced meals and snacks daily. Include 3-5 food groups at meals and 1-2 food groups at snacks. Trust that they will listen to their bodies' hunger and fullness.
- Have pleasant family meals as often as possible and connect with your children.
- When a child you know is feeling down or disappointed, encourage healthy methods of expression, such as talking, writing or art, rather than eating or dieting.
- Educate yourself on normal growth and development. Approximately 20% of our adult height and 50% of our adult weight is gained between 11-19 years of age. Everyone grows at different rates. Therefore, do not compare your child's growth to other children.
- Throw away your bathroom scale and only weigh children at their medical check-ups.
- Be active with your children and help them appreciate what their bodies can do. Help them enjoy the "good feeling" of being active. Make exercise fun and positive.
- Commit to helping children be critical viewers of the media. Discuss inappropriate advertising where children/teens may be sexualized or look too thin. Talk with them about commercials and explain that treating your body well is a much better alternative than dieting or using diet aids.

Preventing disordered eating and poor body image in our children requires more than simply talking about it. It is our way of life that has the most impact.

***The Best New Year's Resolution for 2007—
Make Eating Fruits & Veggies a Priority***
January 2007

As the Nike commercial says...***Just do it!*** As 2007 begins, resolve as a family to eat more fruits & veggies everyday. The evidence is clear—eating a variety of fruits & veggies on a daily basis protects us from many chronic conditions such as heart disease, stroke and cancer while enhancing our bone health. Children mimic adults—so if the adults in their lives eat a healthy diet packed with a variety of fruits & vegetables, children will be more likely to a well.

So get yourself and your family eating a wide variety of produce (not just the French fries, corn & peas that make up 40% of what we typically put on our plates on any given day). How???

- Tape pictures of colorful fruits & veggies to your refrigerator or bathroom mirror as a gentle reminder.
- Make an effort to try at least 1 new fruit or vegetable each week. Rotate who in the family gets to choose it so everyone gets a say in this adventure.
- Keep a bowl of fruit on the counter so when family members are hungry they can grab a quick, healthy snack.
- Place fruits & vegetables front & center in the fridge so they are the first thing you see when you open the door.
- Have a friendly family competition. See who can, on the most days each week, meet the recommended guidelines for fruits & veggies. Go to www.mypyramid.gov to see how much each person in the family needs to eat daily for good health. Track each family member's successes on a log or graph taped to the fridge.
- When dining out, order the vegetable side dish rather than the potato or rice side.
- Eat a salad everyday. Add variety with pepper slices, orange segments, sliced zucchini, cucumber or garbanzo beans.
- Jazz up your morning cereal with fresh sliced fruits (bananas) or dried fruit (craisins, raisins or currents)
- For a quick supper try stir frying several of your favorite veggies with a small amount of meat & serve over quick cooking brown rice or pasta.

Most people need to eat 4 ½ cups of fruits and vegetables daily for good health---that's 1 ½ cups of fruits & veggies/meal!

