National Nutrition Month - March 2014

“Enjoy the Taste of Eating Right” is the theme for National Nutrition Month 2014. Consumer research confirms that taste tops nutrition as the main reason why one food is purchased over another. While social, emotional and health factors also play a role, the foods people enjoy are likely the ones they eat most. This year’s key messages will focus on how to combine taste and nutrition to create healthy meals that follow the Dietary Guidelines recommendations.

Everyone is encouraged to choose the most nutritionally-packed foods you can from each of the five MyPlate food groups. Nutrient-rich foods and beverages provide vitamins, minerals, protein, carbohydrates and other essential nutrients that offer health benefits with relatively few calories. When your daily eating plans include foods like vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs, fat-free or low-fat dairy, beans, nuts and seeds in the appropriate amounts, you are able to get many of the nutrients your body needs, all with relatively low amounts of calories.

Practical way to add nutrient-rich foods and beverages to your daily diet.

• Make oatmeal creamier by using fat-free milk instead of water. Mix in some raisins, dried cranberries, cherries or blueberries, too.
• Make sandwiches on whole-grain bread, such as whole wheat or whole rye. Add slices of avocado, tomatoes or cucumber to lean roast beef, ham, turkey or chicken.
• When eating out, look for nutrient-rich choices, such as entrée salads with grilled seafood and low-calorie dressing, baked potatoes topped with salsa, grilled vegetables and reduced-fat cheese and yogurt parfaits made with strawberries and blueberries.
• Drink nutrient-rich, low-sugar beverages such as low-fat or fat-free milk or 100-percent fruit juice.
• Top foods with chopped nuts or reduced-fat sharp cheddar to get crunch, flavor and nutrients from the first bite.
• Spend a few minutes to cut and bag vegetables to they are in easy reach of every family member. Some ready-to-eat favorites include red, green or yellow peppers, broccoli or cauliflower flowerets, carrots, celery sticks, cucumbers, peas or radishes.
• Serve meals that pack multiple nutrient-rich foods into one dish, such as hearty, broth-based soups that are full of colorful vegetables, beans and lean meat. Make chili with a dollop of low-fat yogurt. Serve these with whole-grain breads or rolls.
• For dessert, enjoy a tropical treat by blending mango, plain low-fat milk, ice and a splash of pineapple juice, or stir chocolate syrup into a cup of coffee-flavored yogurt, freeze and enjoy.

Limit added sugars and reduce the major sources of solid fats. Drink few regular sodas, fruit drinks and sports drinks, and cut back on cakes, cookies, ice cream, cheese and fatty meats like sausage, hotdogs and bacon. You don’t have to give up these foods entirely, but find way to enjoy small amounts occasionally.
**Chicken Fajitas**

1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breast  
2 teaspoons chili powder  
2 teaspoons garlic powder  
1 ½ tablespoons vegetable oil  
1 red bell pepper, thinly sliced  
1 green bell pepper, thinly sliced  
1 medium onion, thinly sliced  
6 whole wheat tortillas, 8-inch

**Optional Toppings:**  
6 ounces low fat cheddar cheese, shredded  
1 cup tomato, chopped  
Cilantro, chopped  
Jalapeno, sliced

Freeze chicken 3 minutes until firm and easier to cut. Cut chicken into ¼-inch strips. Place in a single layer on a plate. Wash hands, knife, and cutting board. Sprinkle both sides of strips with chili and garlic powder. Add oil to a 12-inch skillet. Heat to medium high. Add chicken strips. Cook about 3-5 minutes, stirring frequently. Add bell peppers and onion. Stir and cook until vegetables are tender and chicken is no longer pink. (Heat chicken to at least 165°F). Scoop chicken mixture (⅔ cup each) onto tortillas. Top with your favorite toppings. Serve flat or rolled. Makes 6.

**Options:** Use 1 can (15 ounces) black beans (drained, rinsed), beef, or pork instead of chicken. Use corn tortillas instead of whole wheat.

**Clever Ideas**

- Heat cold tortillas to make them easier to fold. Cover tortillas with a moist paper towel and heat 30 seconds in microwave.
- Wear plastic gloves to handle hot peppers. No gloves? Wash hands with soap and water before touching your face, your cooking utensils, or another person.
- 3 cups pepper=2 medium pepper

**Nutrition Facts:** Serving size: 1 tortilla with ⅔ cup filling equals: 290 Calories, 80 Calories from Fat, 9g Total Fat, 0.5g Saturated Fat, 0g Trans-Fat, 50 mg Cholesterol, 270mg Sodium, 28g Total Carbohydrate, 3g Dietary Fiber, 4g Sugars, 21g Protein, Vitamin A 8%, Vitamin C 25%, Calcium 2%, Iron 10%

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**Breakfast Outside the Box**

As a source of whole grains and fiber, some cereals can’t be beat. And when paired with milk, you get an additional 16 essential nutrients including protein, calcium and vitamin D.

But too many people start their days with a bowl of cereal made from refined flour and packed with a whole lot of sugar. It tastes good, but it probably won’t sustain your all morning.

Begin your day instead with a good combination of foods that contain fiber and protein. These 2 nutrients help fill you up and keep you going all morning. Include vegetables and fruits, whole grains, and high-protein food such as milk, yogurt, nuts or eggs. For cereal, pick one with fewer than 6 grams of sugar and at least 4 grams of fiber per 30-gram serving.

**Here are some winning ideas:**

- Oatmeal made with skim or low-fat milk, instead of water, and fruit
- Nut butter and banana wrapped in a whole-grain tortilla
- Yogurt parfait: whole-grain cereal, yogurt and fruit
- Corn tortillas rolled with black beans, tomato and reduced-fat cheddar cheese
- Scrambled eggs on whole-grain toast with raw vegetables
- Whole-grain rye crackers with hummus

**Why is breakfast so vital?** Research shows that breakfast-eaters have better memory and concentration skills, better nutrient intake for the day overall, and are better able to stay at a healthy weight than those who skip breakfast. That’s food for thought.

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