Dear Friends,

With spring hopefully right around the corner, I hope everyone is gearing up for better weather and spring cleaning!

In this newsletter, you will find information about spring cleaning, home-cooked meals, exercise myths, arthritis facts, some tips to help you protect your eyes, weight loss tips and a few new recipes for you to try!

If you are interested in learning to can or just want to refresh your canning skills, you might want to consider joining UT Extension and the UT Culinary Institute in our Canning College Spring Classes on April 8 & 15. Summer class dates will be announced soon. Please contact the Knox County Extension Office for more information.

Put a “spring” in your step and remember to aim for walking 10,000 steps per day.

Enjoy!

Heather
Top 9 Spring Cleaning Chores

Spring cleaning at one time involved a complete top to bottom cleaning of every square inch of a home. Today’s spring cleaning may not be as involved, but there are a few tasks that need to be performed seasonally in your home. Here are the top chores that need to be done this season:

1. Storing Seasonal Clothing—When warmer weather arrives, it’s time to pack away sweaters, coats, and other cold weather clothing. Make sure storage containers and areas are clean, cool, dark, and dry to keep clothing in good shape for next winter.

2. Check Appliances—Each spring take the time to inspect your major appliances for wear and tear. The coils of the refrigerator should be vacuumed, and the drain pan should be cleaned out. Accumulated lint needs to be cleaned from the dryer vents. Clean out accumulated gunk from your oven and refrigerator. Clean dishwashers, disposals and washing machines. Heating and cooling units need maintenance as well.

3. Clutter Control—Spring is the perfect time to remove clutter and excess from the home. Try the 4 container method to help figure out items that need to be kept, sold, given away, or trashed. You’ll see a huge difference in how easy it is to clean your home after you’ve reduced your clutter.

4. Garage Storage—It may be a little daunting, but chances are your garage could use some attention this spring. Whether you need to organize a garage cleanup day or just remove a few items to be sold in a garage sale, it makes sense to pay a little attention to your garage this spring. Try some new organization tools or techniques to store sports equipment, Christmas decorations, etc.

5. Patios and Outdoor Areas—Spring is a great time to get the outdoors ready for entertaining. Clean the patio and outdoor furniture. Do some basic landscaping repairs on the lawn, shrubbery and plants. Check doors, windows, fences and exterior for repair needs. Lawn maintenance or pest prevention may need to be performed as well.

6. Window Treatments—Whether you need to wash blinds, send drapes to the dry cleaners, or throw washable curtains into the washing machine, getting your window treatments clean after a long winter can brighten an entire room. Be sure to dust down the window casing, wash window sills, and clean any window hardware while you are at it.

7. Beds and Bedding—Mattresses occasionally need to be inspected and cleaned, and in some cases flipped. Use this time to inspect your mattress pads, pillow covers, and all bedding for needed replacement or repairs.

8. Ceiling Fans—Take a few minutes to spring clean the ceiling fans in your home. An entire season of dust and buildup will need to be cleaned away before we can enjoy these fans.

9. Outdoor Grills—Warmer temperatures may mean it is time to fire up your outdoor grill. If your grill has spent the winter sitting in silence, it may need a little tune-up to be ready for spring and summer fun.
Eating home-cooked meals can be a good way to trim fat, sugar and salt from your diet. However, many people find that their hectic schedule leaves little time for cooking—but with a little planning and prep work, homemade meals can be quick and hassle-free.

1. Create a recipe repertoire. Keep cookbooks easily accessible, mark favorite dishes for handy reference or put recipes in a binder with the quickest meals listed first. Get new ideas from library cookbooks and websites such as www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov.

2. Plan meals in advance. Make menus for a week or two and generate a list of required ingredients. To save money, plan meals around what is on sale.

3. Stock up on staples such as 100 percent whole grain pasta, cereals, bread, rice and canned tomatoes.

4. Prepare a roasted chicken, chopped vegetables, fruit salad, soup and a green salad on the weekends. Make healthy snacks to go—try a trail mix of nuts and dried fruit, or make muffins. Keep fruits on the countertop for easy access.

5. Designate kitchen roles for each family member so kids can learn good nutrition from the start.

More tips: Chop and mix omelet ingredients the night before...Remember to defrost items ahead of time...Cook two meals and freeze one....Start a slow cooker dish for a hot and tasty dinner.

Exercise Myths E-X-P-O-S-E-D

There are a lot of misconceptions about working out, including those that might convince you it’s not worth the bother. Here’s the truth behind the Big 3 Exercise Myths:

1. NO PAIN, NO GAIN. No way! Exercising to the point of pain may lead to injury and do more harm than good. Allow your body to gradually adapt to the added demands of your workout. Moving at a pace that's comfortable for your heart, lungs and muscles will improve their functioning.

2. IT MAKES YOU TIRED - just the opposite. In fact, researchers recently analyzed 70 studies and concluded that rather than making you tired, regular exercise actually makes you feel more energetic. But if you tend to feel exhausted after exercising, your activity may be too strenuous. Try easing up a bit.

3. IT REQUIRES A LOT OF TIME. Any amount of regular exercise will help improve your overall health, even if it totals just 30 minutes a day. So fit in a short job, ride your bike or rake leaves. It all adds up to real benefits.

“Here’s the truth behind the Big 3 Exercise Myths...”
Understanding Arthritis

Know What Arthritis Is

- Arthritis: “arth = joint; “itis” = inflammation
- #1 cause of disability in the United States
- 43 million or 1 in 5 Americans have doctor-diagnosed arthritis

Common types of arthritis:
- Osteoarthritis (21 million) – breakdown of the cushioning tissue, called cartilage, in the joints. This is the most common form of arthritis. It affects the weight-bearing joints of the knees, hips and lower back as well as the hands.
- Rheumatoid Arthritis (2.1 million) - causes inflammation of the lining of joint tissue, leading to deformity.
- Juvenile Arthritis (300,000) - produces serious complications in severe cases or causes few problems in very mild cases.
- Fibromyalgia is a pain syndrome involving muscles and muscle attachment areas.
- Gout is a rheumatic disease causing sudden, severe episodes of pain and tenderness, redness, warmth and swelling in the joints.
  - Lupus affects the skin and body tissues and possibly organs such as kidneys, lungs or heart.

Know the Warning Signs of Arthritis

If you have any of the following symptoms, see your doctor:
Swelling in one or more joints.
Morning stiffness lasting 30 minutes or longer.
Persistent joint pain or tenderness.
Inability to move a joint in the normal way.
Weight loss, fever or weakness, and joint pain that cannot be explained.

Simple Berry & Vanilla Cream Trifle

1 purchased butter loaf cake (11.5 oz), sliced
1 box (6 serving size) vanilla instant pudding
1 teaspoon vanilla
2 cups whole milk
1/2 cup sour cream
1 container (8 oz) whipped topping thawed
1 lb fresh strawberries, stems removed, sliced
1 pint (2 cups) fresh blueberries

In medium bowl, beat pudding mix, vanilla, milk and sour cream with electric mixer on medium speed until soft pudding forms. Cover; refrigerate.
In trifle bowl or large clear bowl, arrange 1 layer of sliced cake to cover entire bottom of bowl. Top with a layer of pudding, then a layer of whipped topping, and then a layer of strawberries. Repeat all layers except blueberries. Continue with layers until bowl is full. Cover with plastic wrap; refrigerate until ready to serve.
Certain habits can cause stress, strain, and even permanent damage to your eyes. Are you guilty of any of these?

You wear old glasses/contacts. If your lens prescription is outdated, it could cause eyestrain, sore eyes, and headaches. Have your eyes examined by an eye health specialist and your lens prescription re-evaluated every two years or sooner.

You stare at a computer screen all day. If you spend too much time focused on the computer, you may forget to blink or look away as often as your eyes require. This can lead to dry eyes and eye fatigue. The National Eye Institute recommends the 20-20-20 rule to help reduce eyestrain: Every 20 minutes, look away about 20 feet in front of you for 20 seconds. Use a couple drops of saline solution to keep your eyes moist and comfortable.

You don’t wash your hands. Bacteria on our hands can transfer to contact lenses or directly into your eyes when you touch them, causing bacterial and viral infections. Wash your hands thoroughly before putting in lenses and applying eye makeup. Avoid touching eyes as much as possible.

You don’t clean your contact lenses properly.

You don’t wear the right sunglasses. Buy sunglasses that block out 99 – 100% of UVA and UVB rays, and wear them whenever you spend prolonged time in the sun.

You don’t use the right eye protection. Your regular glasses won’t provide enough protection when you’re doing yard work, playing certain sports, or doing other activities that can injure your eyes. Use protective eyewear made of polycarbonate materials, which are 10 times stronger than regular eyeglasses.

You smoke. Studies have linked smoking to increased risks for macular degeneration, optic nerve damage, and cataracts, which can all cause blindness.

You don’t eat properly. Your eyes need the right nutrients to stay healthy and age well, just like the rest of your body.

You read in the dark. Reading in dim lighting can cause eyestrain and fatigue, which can cause headaches.

You’re overweight or obese. The National Eye Institute says being overweight or obese increases risk for developing diabetes, glaucoma, and other conditions, which can lead to vision loss.

### Cinnamon Burst Cheerios® Snack Mix

3 cups Cinnamon Burst Cheerios cereal
2 cups Honey Nut Cheerios cereal
4 cups popped popcorn
1 bag (6 oz) dried cranberries
1 can (6 oz) salted almonds
1 bag (2.5 oz) crispy apple chips, broken into pieces (about 2 cups)

In a large bowl or re-sealable gallon-size food-storage bag, mix all ingredients.
Store tightly covered or sealed.
Makes 12 servings.
Top 10 Weight-Loss Tips

The standard weight-loss advice—“eat less, exercise more”—is effective, but other tricks may help as well:
1. **Write down what you eat.** Doing so could increase your weight loss.
2. **Turn off the TV.** Television and other screens encourage us to be sedentary. Study participants who cut their TV time in half burned an extra 120 calories a day.
3. **Eat more fiber.** Americans only eat about half the recommended daily amount. Get more fiber from whole grains, fruits and vegetables.
4. **Drink more water.** Two cups of water before each meal may help you shed more pounds.
5. **Step on the scale.** Individuals who weigh themselves more frequently (at least weekly) are more successful at weight management.
6. **Find a buddy.** Team up with a household member or join a support group for better results.
7. **Toss the junk.** Discard any food or drink in your pantry or fridge that would interfere with your weight-reduction plan.
8. **Sleep well.** Women who sleep less than 5 hours a night are 32 percent more likely to have major weight gain than those who sleep more than 7.
9. **Check your meds.** Many medications can lead to weight gain—check with your doctor or health care provider if you’re concerned.
10. **Simmer down.** Stress can increase your risk of weight gain. Fortunately, exercise helps manage stress and promote weight loss.

**Italian Tortellini-Vegetable Salad**

1 package (9 oz) refrigerated cheese-filled tortellini  
1 package (9 oz) refrigerated spinach-filled tortellini  
2 cups small fresh cauliflower florets  
1 c oil-packed julienne-cut sun-dried tomatoes (from 6.5 oz jar, drained)  
1/4 cup red onion  
1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley  
1 medium yellow bell pepper, chopped  
2 jars (6 oz each) marinated artichoke hearts, drained, coarsely chopped and reserving 1/4 cup  
1 bottle (8 oz) Italian dressing

1. In large saucepan, cook and drain tortellini as directed on package, adding cauliflower and broccoli during last minute of cooking time. Rinse with cold water to cool; drain well.
2. Meanwhile, in large bowl, mix tomatoes, onion, parsley, bell pepper and artichokes.
3. Add tortellini, cauliflower and broccoli to salad; stir gently. Add dressing and reserved 1/4 cup artichoke liquid; toss to mix. Serve immediately, or cover and refrigerate until serving time. Make 8 servings.

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