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RAISING KIDS, EATING RIGHT, SPENDING SMART, LIVING WELL

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Timely Tips 

S-P-R-I-N-G into some calorie cutting strategies

Cutting calories does not have to be difficult, but it does require some thought and careful planning. As the weather begins to warm up try some of these calories cutting strategies to fight off pounds gained during the winter months.



- Cut back on sugar sweetened beverages such as sodas, sweet teas, and fruit and sports drinks. One 20 ounce soda contains 280 calories, a 16 ounce fruit drink contains 230 calories, and a 16 ounce sweet tea contains 200 calories. Water contains no calories and replacing these drinks with diet sodas, unsweetened teas, or water are effective calorie-cutting strategies.
- Limit the amount of sugar you consume by paying attention to the amount of sweet treats you are eating. Try using a low-calorie version of some of your favorite treats.
- Reduce your fat intake. Fats provide more calories than sugar and starches and it is a concentrated form of energy. Using foods that are grilled and baked instead of fried can cut a person's fat intake considerably. Trimming excess fat from meat and poultry also reduces fat intake. Baked goods and desserts also contain high amounts of fat, so watch your intake of these foods.
- Pay attention to portion sizes. Portion sizes have gotten much bigger in recent years and cutting calories may mean learning what a standard portion size is. For example, one slice of bread, ½ cup of rice or pasta, ½ cup of cooked cereal all count as a serving.
- Share a meal with a friend when eating out. Choosing small or medium portions, or setting aside half of the food you ordered for another meal can also be ways to cut portion sizes.
- Include more fruits and vegetables with your meal and eat them as snacks. In fact, it is a good idea to begin meals with a salad.
- Eat smaller, more frequent meals throughout the day to curb your appetite and reduce cravings.
- Being involved in physical activity is important in reducing calories. Weight loss occurs when we burn more calories than we consume. In addition, regular physical activity is one of the most important things we can do for our health.

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Source: Ingrid Adams, Extension Specialist for Food and Nutrition, University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture.

Do what you can, with what you have, where you are. ~Theodore Roosevelt

Foods to reduce in your diet

The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans provides recommendations of foods to reduce in your daily diet.

- **SODIUM.** All Americans should strive to consume no more than 2,300 mg sodium per day. People 51 and older or those who are African American, have high blood pressure, diabetes, or kidney disease should consume no more than 1500 mg of sodium per day. 
- **SUGARY DRINKS.** Drink water instead of sugary drinks. Sugary drinks make up a large portion of the excess calories in an average American's daily diet. Cutting down on these drinks decreases your daily calorie intake, and can help control your weight. 
- **SATURATED FAT.** Saturated fat should make up no more than 10 percent of your daily calories. This is 22 grams per day for a 2,000 calorie diet. High levels of saturated fat in the diet contribute significantly to your risk for heart disease, heart attacks, stroke, and other related conditions.
- **REFINED GRAINS.** Consume no more than 3 ounces per day. Instead choose products made with whole grains whenever possible. The refining of whole grains returns some, but not all, of the essential vitamins and minerals that were removed. Refined grains also lack fiber, an important component to any healthy diet. Many products made with refined grains are also high in fat and sugar, like cookies and other desserts.
- **CHOLESTEROL.** Consume no more than 300 mg per day. High dietary cholesterol contributes to higher levels of cholesterol in the blood, which increases your risk for heart disease, heart attacks, stroke, and other related conditions.

Source: Extension Specialists for Food and Nutrition, University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture

Put Your Tax Refund to Work

As tax time approaches, many of us begin to think about the amount of our federal income tax refund or try figure how much we may owe. Income taxes are based on the total income earned minus any allowable deductions. The majority of people have their income tax deducted directly from their paycheck. The difference between the actual amount owed in income tax and the amount paid is calculated once per year. If you have overpaid during the year, you will receive a refund. If you underestimated your federal income tax responsibility, you will owe taxes. Your goal should be to break even at tax time. In other

words, you do not want to receive a big refund check or have to write a big check to cover your tax obligation. In tax year 2008, over \$324 billion was returned to 111.7 million taxpayers in tax refunds. The average individual refund amount was \$2,902. Overpaying your estimated monthly tax obligation can be viewed as a form of forced savings. In reality this money could be working for you throughout the year. What could you have accomplished last year with an additional \$240 per month? By putting the extra money to use on a monthly basis, you could increase your savings or emergency fund, make an extra house or car payment, or pay-off debt.

To change your current withholding or the amount deducted from your paycheck, you will need to file a new W-4 form with your employer. Your employer should be able to provide you with a new W-4 form. The IRS has an online withholding calculator to help you calculate an accurate withholding amount. The online calculator is available at <http://www.irs.gov/individuals/>. Before you begin using the calculator, you will need your most recent pay stubs and your most recent tax return.

References:

2010 Tax Statistics, Internal Revenue Service. Retrieved October 9, 2010 from <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-soi/10taxstatscard.pdf>.

Tax Information for Individuals, Internal Revenue Service. Retrieved October 9, 2010 from <http://www.irs.gov/individuals/>

Source: Jennifer Hunter, Extension Specialist for Family Finance, University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture





Military Extension Adventure Camps 2011

Do you know of a service member parent who has a teenage child (ages 13-19) that has been deployed and has now returned home? Seven high adventure camps are being planned for 2011. These camps will provide military parents and their teenagers time to connect after a deployment.

Military parents and their teens will get to spend some quality time with each other while camping in different parts of Kentucky. They will have the chance to connect. They will be able to work together as a team and solve problems together. Parent and teens will create shared memories together while with other families who have been through similar experiences. Parent and teens will also learn to adapt to new and unfamiliar situations. They will learn how to work with others to complete tasks despite differences. They will be able to work on communicating together. Most important of all, the families will get to have fun while spending time together on these adventures.

The tentative camp dates are:

- April 29 – May 1, 2011: 2-day beginners backpack trip through Mammoth Cave National Park
- June 20 – 24, 2011: 5-day white water rafting trip in West Virginia
- June 30 – July 3, 2011: 4-day canoeing and coastal camping at Land Between the Lakes
- July 16 – 24, 2011: 7-day backpacking trip through Daniel Boone National Forest
- August 12 – 14, 2011: Wilderness Survival at Big South Fork National Park
- September 16 – 18, 2011: Tent camping, challenge course, and corn maze adventure at Life Adventure Center in Versailles, Kentucky
- November 18 – 20, 2011: Cold Weather Camping at Lake Cumberland



For more information about these camps, go to <http://www.ca.uky.edu/hes/index.php?p=590>.

Source: Stephanie Moses, Extension Associate for Family and Consumer Sciences and Kerri Ashurst, Senior Extension Specialist for Family and Consumer Sciences, University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture

A is for Asparagus

This month look for this wonderfully, flavorful vegetable at your local farmer's market. Asparagus packs in a ton of good vitamins and minerals in those stalks! Steam it, pickle it, sauté it, roast it — the possibilities are endless!



When buying asparagus, choose stalks that are bright green with purple shaded tight tips; these are the most tender and tasty. It is best to cook it soon after buying, because asparagus can become tough and woody after several days. Storing asparagus properly in your refrigerator can help keep it tender if you can't cook it right away. Place it upright with the cut ends in water or wrapped in wet paper towels and covered with plastic to keep the stalks moist.

Locally grown asparagus is available now until June, so be sure to take advantage of the season and taste the difference!

Source: Extension Specialists for Food and Nutrition, University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture

Cook's Corner

Asian Asparagus Salad

- 1 pound fresh asparagus
- 1 1/2 TBS low sodium soy sauce
- 2 tsp sugar or artificial sweetener
- 1 TBS olive oil
- 2 tsp sesame seeds



1. Snap and discard root ends of asparagus
2. Wash remaining stalk
3. Slice into 1 1/2 inch lengths diagonal
4. Blanch asparagus for 1-3 minutes, until a bright green color
5. Cool immediately
6. Combine soy sauce, sugar, olive oil and sesame seeds in a glass bowl. Mix until dressing is dissolved
7. In a gallon zip sealed bag, add asparagus and dressing. Turn bag to coat asparagus with dressing and chill for 15 minutes. Turn bag again and chill for another 15 minutes before serving.

Yields: 4, 1/2 cup servings

Nutritional Analysis:

70 calories, 4.5 grams fat, 5 grams sat. fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 250 mg sodium, 7 grams carbohydrate, 2 gram fiber and 3 grams protein.