

Extension Notes

Family and Consumer Sciences

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LIVING WELL

During March, family and consumer science agents with the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service will make special efforts to educate citizens about ways to improve the quality of life for adults, youth, individuals and families.

The emphasis is on eating right through nutrition and food safety, spending smart through financial management skills, enjoying home through safety, relationships and parenting skills, and sharing time through community and volunteerism.

Whether it's managing diabetes through meal planning and exercise, evaluating long-term care insurance or getting tips on spending quality family time, extension agents across the nation and state have information that can help. Programs for extension family and consumer sciences focus on making a difference in the lives of people, families and communities.

The new 2010 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* focus on balancing calories with physical activity, and encourage Americans to consume more healthy foods like vegetables, fruits, whole grains, fat-free and low-fat dairy products, and seafood, and to consume less sodium, saturated and trans fats, added sugars, and refined grains.

Here is a preview of some of the tips that will be provided to help consumers translate the *Dietary Guidelines* into their everyday lives:

- Enjoy your food, but eat less
- Avoid oversized portions
- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables
- Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk
- Compare sodium in foods like soup, bread, and frozen meals – and choose the foods with lower numbers
- Drink water instead of sugary drinks

The *Dietary Guidelines* is available at www.dietaryguidelines.gov.

“Superfoods” is a word you hear often in the media. These are foods that go beyond meeting basic nutritional needs, such as calories or vitamins or proteins, to help protect us from the risk of many chronic diseases. Many of these superfoods are grown in Kentucky including nuts, blueberries, broccoli, spinach, tomatoes and whole grains.

Nuts, such as black walnuts, have a concentration of omega-3s. A quarter-cup provides 90.8 percent of the daily value for these essential fats. Black walnuts have many potential health benefits ranging from cardiovascular protection to the promotion of better cognitive function to anti-inflammatory benefits helpful in asthma, rheumatoid arthritis and inflammatory skin diseases such as eczema and psoriasis.

Blueberries with their rich vibrant color are antioxidant rich and may help prevent age-related diseases, including Alzheimer's and some forms of cancer. They also contain fiber and vitamin C.

Broccoli contains sulforaphane, a cancer-preventive phytochemical shown to reduce cancer in laboratory and animal studies.

Dark green spinach has a high lutein content. Studies show that this antioxidant protects against eye diseases, such as age-related macular degeneration and cataracts. You can think of this as sort of sunglasses for your retinas.

The same pigment that gives tomatoes their appealing color also appears to help lower the risk of certain types of cancer, especially prostate, lung and stomach. The nutrient is called lycopene. Many Kentuckians grow tomatoes in their own yard and enjoy their scrumptiousness right off the vine. They can also be grown hydroponically all winter.

Whole grains—which include wheat, corn, oats, barley, quinoa, sorghum, spelt and rye – are also food for weight management because they help stave off hunger. In countless studies, they have been associated with reducing the risk of heart disease and cancer and reducing blood glucose levels, which contributes to diabetes.

In general, people who are looking to change their diets should make small changes and make them gradually. Nuts, for example, in general are high in calories, so moderation is the key. The best approach is to reap the health benefits of eating walnuts but not add excessive calories to your daily intake. Instead of just adding walnut to your current diet, eat them in replacement of foods that are high in saturated fats, such as cheese and meat, and limit your intake of these tasty treats to the recommended 1.5 ounces per day or about 20 walnut halves. Many diseases—heart disease, diabetes, cancer, stroke, osteoporosis—all have a pretty strong link to diet and lifestyle. The more you can do to prevent these diseases, the better.