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Get Fit for Summer!

Summer afternoon - summer afternoon; to me those have always been the two most beautiful words in the English language. - Henry James, 1843-1916

Summertime is finally here! Long, warm days tempt us outdoors. The farmer's market beckons with berries and watermelon, zucchini and tomatoes. There's no better time to get fit, and this month's newsletter will help you get started!

Were here to help!

Log in to your Wellness Resource Center to access your wellbeing- you'll receive a personalized wellbeing report and action plan.

Call MHN using the toll-free number and an intake representative will explain your benefits and connect or refer you to a professional who can help.



Be Choosy About What You Chew

If your fridge and pantry are stocked with healthy foods, chances are you'll eat them! Foods with empty calories, like cookies, chips and soda, can't tempt you if you keep them out of your kitchen. As you plan your meals and shop for food, keep this chart handy to make sure you are making the best choices for good health.

The recommended servings per day are just rough estimates; your individual needs will depend on your age, gender and activity level. Check out ChooseMyPlate.gov for details and for more healthy tips.

Food group	Healthy choices
Grains (about 3-4 ounce equivalents)	<p>Choose whole grains (like whole wheat, oats, and brown rice) instead of refined grains (like white flour or white rice) whenever you can. At least half of the grains you eat should be whole grains.</p> <p>Experiment! Quinoa and barley are easy to cook, and they're high in protein and fiber. Add flax, oats and buckwheat to baked goods for nutritious breakfasts and snacks.</p> <p>Watch out for sugar, fat and excess salt, even in whole grain options.</p>
Vegetables (about 2-3 cups) Fruits (about 1½ cups)	<p>Eat up! About half of your plate should be fruits and vegetables, which are rich in nutrients your body needs. A healthy diet high in the right kinds of fruits and vegetables may help protect against heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and some forms of cancer.</p> <p>Experiment! Broccoli, carrots and potatoes are all great choices, but so are bok choy, kabocha squash and plantains. Taking chances with unfamiliar foods and recipes will help your family find new favorites and make it easier to buy fresh produce year-round.</p> <p>Watch out for unhealthy levels of salt or fat in recipes or in prepared fruits and vegetables. Canned fruit should be packed in juice, not syrup, and canned vegetables should be labeled "low sodium." Find recipes that let the natural flavor of vegetables (whether fresh or frozen) shine!</p>
Dairy (about 3 cups)	<p>Switch to low-fat or fat-free milk, yogurt and cheese. You'll get the calcium, vitamin D, potassium and protein you need without unhealthy saturated fats.</p> <p>Experiment! Try low-fat or fat-free yogurt in fruit smoothies, as</p>

Food group	Healthy choices
	<p>a dip for fruit or veggies, or as a topping for chili or baked potatoes.</p> <p>Watch out for milk-based products that are high in fat and/or sugar and low in calcium. Foods like butter and cream cheese don't contain enough calcium to be included in the dairy group. Chocolate milk, ice cream and higher fat cheeses hide a lot of empty calories in each serving.</p>
<p>Protein foods (about 5-6½ ounce equivalents)</p>	<p>Go lean! Start with lean cuts of beef or pork, skinless poultry (white meat is best), or extra lean ground beef (at least 90% lean). Avoid frying, breading or adding high fat sauces or gravies.</p> <p>Experiment! If you're not a vegetarian, choose seafood (especially fish like salmon and trout that are rich in omega-3 fatty acids) as your protein at least three times a week. Vegetarians and carnivores alike should choose beans, peas and soy products often.</p> <p>Watch out for meat products that are high in saturated fat and cholesterol.</p>
<p>Oils (5-7 teaspoon allowance)</p>	<p>Think small! Unlike solid fats, oils (such as canola oil and olive oil) contain essential nutrients. Still, most of us don't need much extra oil in our diets.</p>

HEALTHY SHOPPING TIPS

Plan ahead. Plan a healthy menu for the week, and use that to create your shopping list. You'll buy only what you need, when you need it, and avoid ordering pizza on Wednesday night because you don't know what to make for dinner.

Shop the perimeter of the store first - that's where fresh produce and dairy products are generally kept. Pick up refrigerated and frozen items last, and avoid the processed and snack foods in the center aisles.

Don't shop on an empty stomach. We've all been there – hunger makes it that much harder to walk by the big display of chips or cookies on sale that week.

If possible, shop for fresh produce at least twice a week. Fruit and vegetables are tastier and more nutritious when they're fresh.

Read labels carefully. Words like "healthy" and "low-fat" can be misleading. Pay attention to the nutritional value of each serving (protein, fiber and nutrients versus calories, sugars and fat), and to whether the serving size is realistic. (Are you *really* going to eat two cookies?)

If, like many Americans, you're trying to cut calories as well as make healthier choices, remember to watch your portion sizes. Slowing down and enjoying each bite can also help you avoid overeating. For more information on living well, check out MHN's member website.

Also in this Issue:



Are You Ready for Change?

Nobody's perfect, so there's probably something about your life, habits or routine that you'd like to change. Maybe you want to eat healthier or exercise more. To improve your chances of making a long-lasting change, try these tips:

1. LIST THE BENEFITS OF HEALTHY CHANGE.

To increase your chance of success, remember to pick just one or two areas of your life that you want to change. Then write down exactly what you could gain by making a change. You might note that you'd have more energy if you exercised, for example, or lower your blood pressure if you ate healthier meals.

2. EVALUATE YOUR READINESS FOR CHANGE.

Behavior change happens over time, not overnight. Knowing where you are in the change process can help you develop a plan for moving forward - and ultimately achieving lifelong change. Which stage of change describes you?

Considering making a change - You're thinking about change, and see some of the benefits. You see a lot of roadblocks, too, though. You're just not sure if change is possible or will be worth the effort.

Planning or taking some action - Change now looks like a real possibility, and you believe that the benefits will be worth the work. You have a plan for overcoming roadblocks and you're starting to lay the foundation for change.

Making the change - You are making the change, and working hard to make it part of your routine. You are committed to your goal.

3. MOVE TOWARDS CHANGE BY CREATING A S-M-A-R-T GOAL.

A S-M-A-R-T goal is:

Specific - You know exactly what you need to do.

Measurable - You can track your progress easily and objectively.

Attainable - You have a clear vision of the steps you'll take.

Realistic - You are honest with yourself about the challenges, and have a good plan for confronting them.

Timely - You have a clear, reasonable timeline.

Example of a SMART goal: I will lose 10 pounds (measurable and specific) by June 1 (timely) by walking briskly outside four times a week (measurable, attainable and realistic).

4. STAY ON TRACK.

It takes time for a healthy change to become a solid habit. In the meantime, you're more likely to stay committed to your goal if you:

Expect the unexpected - Be flexible, and develop a back-up plan to keep you moving forward when changes in your life, mood or motivation threaten to stop you in your tracks. Have an exercise video for rainy days, go-to healthy recipes for busy evenings and a good pep talk for moments of temptation. If you do slip up, learn from the experience and get back on track.

Have fun - Make sure that something about the change is enjoyable for you. For example, find a form of exercise you enjoy, and switch it up if you begin to get bored. Many people are more committed to exercise if they have a work-out buddy. Others appreciate the chance to get lost in their favorite music or a good audiobook. If you're changing your diet, experiment with new recipes and ingredients and share your favorites with friends.

Celebrate success - Make a list of rewards that you can afford, and that won't take you away from your goal. Celebrate large and small victories with something from your list - a good book (and an undisturbed hour to read it), fresh flowers, an evening out. Making new changes can be challenging, so take time to congratulate yourself for staying on track!

NEED MORE HELP?

Check out the [Readiness for Healthy Change](#) e-learning program on our member website for extra tips on making a change. MHN's member website provides a variety of resources - from articles to assessments - to help you get fit, eat well, quit smoking and achieve other goals.



Family Fitness

For generations, the hours after school and on weekends were filled with bike rides, ball games and tag with kids in the neighborhood. But today, physical play must compete with television, video games and the Internet for our children's attention. This change in childhood activities is affecting our nation's health. According to the CDC:

The prevalence of obesity among children aged 2-19 has increased from 7% in 1980 to 17% in 2010.

Overweight and obesity increase the risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, and osteoarthritis.

Physical activity helps build bone and muscle mass, promotes psychological wellbeing and may help young people do better in school.

Parents can make a big difference, helping their kids develop more active lifestyles. Here are some ways to make physical activity a regular part of your family routine.

JUST HAVE FUN

For adults, getting enough exercise is often a chore. "I have to go work out" doesn't sound like much fun, does it? Instead of nagging your children to exercise more, invite them to play with you. Biking, skating, and playing in the park or your back yard will get your kids' hearts pumping and be loads of fun.

Criticism and lectures can ruin a good time fast. Children will ask for help when they want to know how to do something better, and they'll let you know just how much coaching they want. Focus on having fun and don't let your high expectations discourage your kids from joining you for Frisbee or softball after dinner.

EXERCISE TOGETHER - EARLY AND OFTEN!

One of the best ways to foster good exercise habits is to make fun physical activity something your family does together, and the sooner you start the better! Hiking with the baby in a pack or pushing your toddler on a trike can lay the foundation for associating activity with fun and family.

Once your little one is mobile, try "follow the leader" around your neighborhood or at the local playground. You can incorporate running, hopping, skipping and more, the sillier the better. Just watch out - you might have trouble keeping up when it's your child's turn to lead!

As your kids grow and their schedules fill up with school and extracurricular activities, make a point of scheduling family time after work or school and on weekends. Plan regular hikes, games and active adventures, choosing things your children enjoy to keep their interest level high. Be prepared to switch gears mid-game, since many children like to bounce from one thing to another.

ENCOURAGE ACTIVE PLAY AND PLAN PUMPED UP PARTIES

Invite your children's friends to join the fun! When you have kids over, give them bats and balls and send them outside to play. For a birthday or special weekend activity, take your children and their friends skating, swimming, bowling or hiking. Just don't forget the appropriate safety gear!

ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING

Organized sports are a natural choice for introducing healthy exercise into your child's life, and being part of a team can be an enriching experience. But if you pressure your child to win or are critical of his or her play, you may take the fun right out of the game. So keep it positive.

Also, remember that your child won't necessarily take to your choice of sport or activity. Some kids love to be part of a team, some are more comfortable with individual sports (such as swimming, gymnastics or martial arts) and others don't like competitive sports at all. Non-competitive activities, like dancing and hiking, provide plenty of exercise, too.

Foster a love of physical activity by encouraging your children to try different things and discover what they like best.

Positively reinforce your child's physical activity, whether she's the star of her soccer team or just loves to dance the afternoon away in her bedroom. Making exercise a regular, fun part of your family routine will help you and your kids stay healthy while strengthening family ties.

As your EAP, we at MHN are working to provide you with the information you need to achieve optimal health and wellness. You can call us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and as always, all calls are confidential.



The Importance of Vacations

Here's a news flash: Vacations are good for you!

Everyone knows it's good to take time off and relax. But many American workers act as if it's news to them. They don't take all the time off they have coming to them.

A 2007 survey by the Hudson employment firm found that more than half of American workers don't take all of their earned vacation time. About 30 percent of those surveyed said they take less than half of the time they've earned for the year, and 20 percent said they take only a few days instead of the full week or two that they're due.

Employees who avoid rest and relaxation may be hurting themselves. A number of studies show leisure time – including vacation time from work – is good for your emotional and physical health, and for your work performance.

The Multiple Risk Factor Intervention Trial for the Prevention of Coronary Heart Disease followed 12,000 men with high risk for coronary heart disease over nine years. The findings? The men who failed to take annual vacations were at 21 percent higher risk of death from all causes and were 32 percent more likely to die from heart attack.

The Framingham Heart Study, which began in 1948, found that women who regularly skipped vacations (only indulging once every six years or less often) were almost eight times more likely to develop coronary heart disease than women who averaged two vacations a year.

Research by the Boston Consulting Group found that high-level professionals who were required to take time off were significantly more productive overall than those who spent more time working.

Of course, not everyone has a week or two of vacation time stored up, or the money for a cruise or resort vacation. How can you make your time off count?

Plan wisely. Be thoughtful about what kind of vacation you and your family will most enjoy. If flying makes you anxious, plan a road trip instead. If your toddler screams when trapped in a car seat more than twenty minutes, choose a child-friendly base at a nearby destination.

Mind your budget. A vacation you can't really afford will increase your stress, not decrease it. Check out state and national parks or rent a cabin by the lake. If money's really tight, play tourist in your own backyard. Plan a scenic hike one day and visit a local art museum the next.

Disconnect. Working remotely is great, but it's not a vacation. If you know you'll be tempted to check your email five times a day, leave your phone and laptop at home.

The American workforce lags behind those of other industrialized nations when it comes to taking their allotted time off. Do yourself a favor. Take the time off you have coming to you and enjoy yourself. Then come back to work rested and ready to go!

Getting Started is Easy!
Call your EAP for more information.