What’s Inside?

- Eating together as a family as often as possible is known to be important for growing families. With obesity rates climbing in children, planning and making family meals that are nutrient-rich is as important as ever. Learn more about nutrient-rich meals and try this quick family-pleasing stir-fry recipe.

- Take a look at these guidelines for healthful living and cancer prevention. See how you are doing.

- Chocolate – is it the new health food? Some research has shown that chocolate may be beneficial. Learn more about the research on chocolate by reading the attached article and/or attending our Chocolate Seminar on February 11th.

Welcome to Warren County Visions!

Welcome to the Winter 2009 edition of County Visions, Warren County’s quarterly newsletter from the Family & Community Health Sciences department of Rutgers Cooperative Extension. Contact us at FCHS@co.warren.nj.us for questions or suggestions and be sure to visit us at our website for up to date class offerings at http://warren.njaes.rutgers.edu.

Wishing you and yours a healthy, happy winter!

Sherri Cirignano, MS, RD, LDN
FCHS Educator/Assistant Professor

A Chocolate Seminar:
Is Chocolate the New Health Food?

**Back by Popular Demand**

Wednesday, February 11th @ 3:15 pm
Snow date: Tuesday, February 17th

Wayne Dumont, Jr. Administration Building
Rutgers Cooperative Extension Meeting Room
Route 519 ~ Belvidere, NJ

Fee: $5.00
Registration limited
Call 908-475-6504 to reserve your space!

Need a Speaker?

We can provide a speaker for organizations, schools, or work site groups on the following topics:

- The ‘Functional Foods for Life’ Educational Program Series
  - Nutrition, Physical Activity and Cancer Prevention
  - Navigating the Maze of Organic Foods
  - Food Safety at a Glance
  - Building Healthy Kids

And many, many more........

Contact us @ 908/475.6504 to schedule your group program today!

Take the Walk New Jersey Point-to-Point Challenge

The Walk New Jersey Point-to-Point Challenge is a program designed to encourage youth and adults to virtually walk across New Jersey, from Cape May Point to High Point. The program can be initiated in the classroom, by a group of friends, or individually through this web site. You can track your progress through several virtual walks across scenic New Jersey. Log onto http://familyhealth.rutgers.edu/ to get started today!
Eating Together ~ Eating Well: Nutrient-Rich Family Meals
Sherri Cirignano, MS, RD
Warren County FCHS Educator

Eating together as a family as often as possible is known to be a good idea for growing families. In addition to this, planning and making family meals that are nutrient-rich is as important as ever.

What is a nutrient-rich meal?
There are six groups of nutrients in our food that provide us with what our bodies need for energy and good health. These nutrients are carbohydrates, fats, proteins, (only these three can provide energy) vitamins, minerals and water. A nutrient-rich food is one that has a significant amount of vitamins and minerals, yet a reasonable amount of energy, or calories. Examples include vegetables, fruit, low-fat milk, lean meat and poultry.

The opposite of a nutrient-rich food is an energy-rich or energy-dense food. These foods supply a lot of calories, but few vitamins or minerals. Examples include fast foods, candy, cakes, pies and soft drinks.

Try these tips to make your family meals rich in nutrients:

▶ Keep frozen vegetables on hand to add to casseroles, low sodium soups and stews.
▶ Add dried fruit to whole grains such as breakfast cereals, brown rice and couscous.
▶ Substitute legumes such as chickpeas, black or white beans for ground beef or poultry in recipes.
▶ Switch to whole grain pasta for all of your favorite pasta recipes by trialing different brands to find the one your family likes – they are not all created equal.
▶ Serve fresh, canned or frozen fruit with low-fat yogurt to make “sundaes” as a quick and fun dessert. Chopped nuts or ground flax seed can be included as toppings.
▶ Ask to include a salad and or fruit instead of fries when family meals take place in a restaurant.

Providing nutrient-rich family meals are well worth the effort to promote the health and well being of growing children. Besides being nutritious and tasty, family meals that put healthful choices first are setting the foundation for the choices that our children will be making when they set out on their own someday.

For more information on nutrient-rich meals, try these sites:
www.getmovinggethealthynj.rutgers.edu
www.mypyramid.gov
www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org
Pineapple and Mushroom Stir-Fry

Try this quick stir-fry recipe adding leftover vegetables or poultry to provide a nutrient-rich and crowd-pleasing dish for your next family meal.

1 1/2 cups cooked long grain brown rice or brown basmati rice
1 cup water
1 Tbsp. canola oil
1/2 medium red bell pepper, diced
8 Shiitake or other mushrooms, stems removed, and diced
1 cup chopped green onions
1/2 cup crushed canned pineapple, drained*

Cook the rice according to package instructions. When the rice is almost done cooking, sauté the red pepper and mushrooms in the canola oil for 3 minutes. Add the green onion and pineapple. Continue to sauté for 1 more minute. Using a fork, add the rice to the vegetables in the pan. Cook, breaking up the rice by stirring it, until it is well combined. Serve immediately.

*If desired, you can enhance the flavor of the pineapple by "caramelizing." In a nonstick pan over high heat, stir well-drained pineapple until it is slightly golden (about 5-10 minutes).

Makes 4 servings.

Per serving: 163 calories, 4 g total fat (<1 g saturated fat), 30 g carbohydrate, 3 g protein, 3 g dietary fiber, 10 mg sodium.

Recipe adapted from AICR Recipe Corner, www.aicr.org.
The Power of Prevention
Tips to Decrease Your Cancer Risk

1. **Watch Your Weight**
   Be as lean as possible without becoming underweight

2. **Get Moving ~ Get Healthy**
   Increase towards 15-30 minutes on most days if MD allows

3. **Focus on Plant Foods**
   Limit energy dense foods, processed foods and red meats

4. **Limit Alcohol**
   No more than 1 drink for women, 2 drinks for men a day

5. **Get Nutrition from Food, Not Supplements**
   Don’t use supplements to protect against cancer

6. **Avoid Tobacco**
   Do not smoke or chew tobacco
Is Chocolate the New Health Food?
Sherri Cirignano, MS, RD

Recent news headlines have reported that chocolate is worthy of being included in a healthful diet and chocolate manufacturers are gearing up to promote it as the new health food. As with many topics related to nutrition and health, preliminary research findings have resulted in advice before its time.

Known as ‘the food of the gods’ in early times, chocolate is produced from the beans of the Theobroma cacao tree. Cocoa, cocoa liquor, (produced in the processing of cocoa,) and chocolate products have been studied for possible health benefits.

Some research has shown that chocolate may indeed be beneficial because it provides a source of polyphenols, a group of compounds commonly found in many plant foods. The type of polyphenols found in chocolate is known as flavonoids, or more specifically, flavanols.

Flavanols are present in many plant foods including berries, apples, garlic, onions and tea, as well as in chocolate. Human and animal studies with foods and beverages high in flavonols have indicated a possible benefit to heart health, including lowering of blood pressure and reducing of LDL (low density lipoprotein) cholesterol.

Flavanols are also known to have antioxidant properties. Antioxidants help to guard the cells in our body from damage that can lead to disease. This includes protection from diseases such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes. Studies have also shown that flavanols may be beneficial to the immune system.

Although the health benefits of flavonols may be very real, they are found in varying amounts in chocolate products. Both the type of cocoa bean and the processing method used can affect the flavonol content of the final product. In general, the higher the cocoa content of a chocolate product, the higher the flavanol content. For example, white chocolate, which does not contain cocoa, may provide a minimal amount of flavonols and dark chocolate, which is high in cocoa, has twice the flavonol content as milk chocolate.

Despite the possible health benefits of eating chocolate, it is important to remember that a majority of chocolate products can be very high in calories and provide a significant source of fat. Chocolate contains fat in varying amounts in the form of cocoa butter and from added ingredients such as dairy products and oils. Other foods with a high flavanol content, such as fruits and vegetables, contain fewer calories per serving and more vitamins, minerals and fiber than does chocolate.

As with all high calorie foods, eat chocolate in small quantities and in moderation. It may eventually be proven to provide significant health benefits, but chocolate requires more research to be considered a health food at this time.
“A Chocolate Seminar:
Is Chocolate the New Health Food?”

• Informative, interactive program
• All you ever wanted to know about ‘the food of the gods’
• Tasting, recipes, door prizes and more

JOIN IN THE FUN!!
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