

November – December 2015

Holiday Tips for Those with Food Allergies

An estimated 15 million Americans suffer from food allergies, which affects 1 of every 13 children in the U.S. About 90% of food allergies can be attributed to the "Big 8," including milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts (walnuts, cashews, etc.), fish, shellfish, soy, or wheat. Whether hosting or attending social events that involve food this holiday season, here are some pointers to keep in mind:

If you are hosting, check with your guests about allergies before planning the menu.

When planning to attend parties and dinners, give your host a heads up about food allergies as soon as you receive the invitation. Offer to bring food to share.

Bring allergen-free snacks to holiday parties at school or work (always smart to BYOSF: bring your own safe food) and include an ingredient list card. Also bring your own serving spoon to avoid cross contamination.

If traveling over the holidays, it may be more convenient to bring allergy-free foods with you that travel well.

Don't overlook the turkey –basted or self-basting turkeys can include common allergens such as soy, wheat, and dairy. The safest bet is choosing a turkey with minimal ingredients clearly listed on the food label.

Read labels closely, and if hosting, hang on to food ingredient labels-in case there are questions about possible allergens.

Remember, because of cross contamination from milk chocolate, it is common for dark chocolate products to contain milk, even when not declared on the label.

Before going to events with food, go over 'the rules' with your children and remind them to check with you before eating anything.

Eat before you go. To play it safe, eat a light meal ahead of time and possibly pack an allergen-safe snack.

Resources:

NJH:

<http://www.nationaljewish.org/healthinfo/conditions/allergy/allergens/food/allergy-tips/>

<http://www.nationaljewish.org/healthinfo/lifestyle/health-infographics/hidden-holiday-food-allergens>

Food Allergy Research & Education: <http://blog.foodallergy.org/2013/12/12/6-tips-for-celebrating-the-holidays-with-food-allergies/>

9 Ways to Deal with Dietary Restrictions at Holiday Meals:

<http://www.eatright.org/resource/food/planning-and-prep/cooking-tips-and-trends/9-ways-to-deal-with-dietary-restrictions-at-holiday-meals>

<http://www.webmd.com/allergies/features/allergies-during-the-holidays>

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Feed Your Gut with Fiber

Before you read on, pause for a moment to ask yourself two simple questions. First, “Do I know the recommended daily fiber intake?” Second, “Do I consume the recommended amount of daily fiber?”

The Institute of Medicine’s daily recommended fiber intake for women is 25 grams and 35 grams for men. The average individual consuming the typical Western diet consumes approximately 15 grams of fiber per day. This is roughly half of the recommended intake for both sexes, which is a cause for concern. You may have heard that fiber intake is responsible for feelings of fullness, promotes regular bowel movements and may be associated with a variety of better health outcomes. But did you know that our fiber intake can also influence our gut health?



We may think our diet only affects our cells; however, it can also affect the bacteria that reside within our guts. There are 100 trillion bacteria living in our guts, which provide numerous health benefits. Among many other things, bacteria assist with digestion, produce acids to keep our colon healthy, serve as a barrier protecting the lining of our gut, and help to regulate immunity. Because of all these important roles they play, it is important to keep our gut bacteria healthy.

Fiber may do just the trick. It turns out, our gut bacterial thrive on fiber, giving them the nutrition they need to help stay healthy. In fact, if we do not get adequate daily fiber, our gut bacteria may be starving and begin to eat away at our guts! In a recent study done at the University of Michigan Medical School, researchers looked at mice consuming a variety of diets. The gut bacteria of mice on a fiber-free diet began to consume the protective mucus layer of the mice’s guts, potentially promoting inflammation. The mice receiving only *intermittent* high fiber also experienced destruction of the mucus layer of their guts. However, those mice that received *adequate* fiber *regularly* did not experience gut destruction. From this information, researchers concluded that to prevent breakdown of the protective mucus layer and protect our guts, it’s critical to consume *adequate* amounts of fiber on a *daily* basis. In a similar study done at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, researchers found that fiber supplementation was helpful in feeding our gut bacteria and maintaining health. The participants receiving the high fiber supplemented snack bar had a gut bacteria profile shifting away from an obese towards a lean profile. Similar to the University of Michigan Medical School study, they demonstrated that once adequate fiber intake drops, the health benefits stop.

So, when thinking of your meal plan for the week, remember to pack in the fiber. Choose a variety of foods from whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lentils and legumes for most meals on a daily basis. Feed your gut bacteria, so they don’t feed on you!

Source: News You Can Use, Colorado State University Extension, October 2015

Better Kitchen Safety

In a recent study of 132 home chefs, they were seen frequently touching kitchen towels while cooking raw meats and poultry. Test revealed 89% of the towels were contaminated with coliform bacteria and 26% with *Escherichia coli* (E-coli).

Action Steps: Use paper towels for drying hands; and always wash kitchen towels in hot water with bleach after preparing raw meat!

Source: Bottom Line/Health, November 2015

Combating Holiday Stress

With the Holidays right around the corner, there always seems to be a wide range of feelings of excitement, hopefulness, and anticipation mixed with a little stress. Let's all take a minute to remember what the holiday season is about – to enjoy family, simplify, and slow down. I would like to add one more: don't forget to take care of yourself. According to the Mayo Clinic, keeping stress at a comfortable level is the key to physical and mental well-being. When we feel our hearts start to race, breath quicken, muscles tense, and our vision becoming more acute, our body is reacting to stress and preparing itself for a fight or flight response. A good stress management plan starts when we can listen to our body and notice the symptoms of stress.



Exercise, in almost any form, can act as a stress reliever by boosting your feel-good endorphins and act as meditation in motion, distracting you from your daily worries. Ongoing physical activity and movement can help shed daily tensions and help you focus on a single task. This results in energy and optimism that can help you remain calm and clear through the rest of your daily activities. Exercise helps improve your mood by increasing self-confidence and lowering the symptoms associated with mild depression and anxiety. It helps improve your sleep, which is often disrupted by stress. If you're not an athlete or already so busy you can't imagine adding one more thing to your day, don't give up! You can make a little exercise go a long way toward stress management. Virtually any form of exercise can act as a stress reliever. Go for a walk, jump on the trampoline with your kids; most of all, do something you find fun. 30 minutes of activity will go a long way.

A good night's sleep is also very important for combating stress. Adults need at least seven hours of sleep to move through sleep cycles that help us recover from stress. People don't adapt well to getting less sleep than they need. You can survive a sleep deprived schedule; but your judgment, reaction time and other functions are still impaired. Try to stick to a set scheduled time to go to sleep and when to wake up. Have you ever noticed how hard it is to wake up on Mondays after "sleeping in" on weekends? This is because you have re-set your sleep cycles for a later awakening. Avoid caffeine and alcohol. Caffeine acts as a stimulant to keep people awake. Alcohol keeps people in the lighter stages of sleep and prevents people from reaching deep REM sleep necessary for revitalization. It is good to relax before bed. You can train yourself to associate restful activities with sleep, such as a warm bath or reading, make it easier to fall asleep.

Last, but not least, is nutrition. Take time to make yourself a proper meal. Eating healthy foods helps fuel your body and mind. Skip the high-sugar snack foods and eat plenty of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low-fat or nonfat dairy, and lean proteins. Avoid eating too much.

Through the upcoming Holiday Season, don't forget to take care of yourself and develop a stress management plan. Learn to recognize your body's stress symptoms and get at least 30 minutes of exercise. Make sure you have a good nutrition base and a set sleep schedule. The Holidays are a time for enjoying family and friends, giving thanks for the good in our lives, and celebrating the gifts we have been given. Don't let stress overtake your Holiday Season.

Stop Energy Leaks in Your Home

As we head into the cooler months, a little time and effort could help you save precious money on energy leaks in your home. Millions of homes have under insulated attics, leaky ductwork, and other energy problems. Let's look at a breakdown of national residential energy use and costs in the average residence, and consider some steps to reduce those costs from the October issue of *Consumer Reports*. Costs do vary by region in our big nation.



43% of all Energy Dollars goes to Heating!

- In a forced-air system, 25 to 40 percent of heated (or cooled) air is lost to leaks. So, have your ductwork sealed by a professional to save hundreds of dollars each year lost in leaks.
- Seal drafty windows and doors with caulk or weather stripping.
- Check and be prepared to add insulation to the attic. A typical home needs 11 inches of fiberglass or rock wool, or 8 inches of cellulose insulation. Check the recommendations for your state or specific area.

16% of Energy Dollars are spent on Heating Water.

- If your water heater is more than 10 years old, consider an upgrade to a more efficient model. Some utility companies and retailers offer rebates to consumers who make a switch. Go to www.energystar.gov/waterheaters to learn more.
- Wash lightly soiled clothes in cold water.
- Install low-flow faucets and showerheads throughout the home to save water and energy, too.

15% of Energy Dollars go to "Other" uses.

- Plug your laptop AC adaptor and other electronics power cords into a power strip that can be turned off. This saves energy because the transformer in the adaptor draws power even when the laptop or other device is not attached.
- Watch for other "phantom" energy users in your home!

9% of Energy Dollars are used by Appliances.

- Consider buying a new refrigerator. New Energy Star models may use 50% less energy than a refrigerator from 2001. Don't use the old one in the garage or basement, as it will keep costing you extra money!
- Same is true of old washing machines, as new federal standards took effect in March 2015. Washers older than 10 years may cost you about \$180 more per year.
- Run the dishwasher and clothes washer with full loads to reduce unnecessary expense.

7% of Energy Dollars go to Cooling.

- Central air systems that are more than a decade old could be replaced with a new system that used 40% less energy; and use a professional contractor to size the system correctly for your needs.
- Install a programmable thermostat which can automatically adjust the temperature for maximum savings.
- If your windows are failing (air & moisture leaks in the double-paned windows), consider changing to windows with low-E coating that reflects heat but lets in the sunlight.

5% of Energy Dollars goes to Lighting and 4% to Electronics

- Switch to high-efficiency LEDs that use up to 80% less energy than incandescent bulbs.
- Use some dimmable fixtures on dimmer switches to save more.
- Outdoor lighting can be put on a motion sensor or photocell that turns on at dusk and off at dawn.
- Unplug unused electronics.
- Upgrade to high-efficiency TVs or other electronics, as your budget allows.

Playful Ways for Cooler Days

Relief from the heat is often welcome with the falling leaves and changing colors of fall. With the change of seasons comes change in our active lives. Kids were once playing in the outdoor pool, participating in organized sports like baseball, softball, and soccer, and going for bike rides down to the park during the warmer months. What to do when it starts to get cold outside to keep young hearts healthy, young bones and muscles strong, and young bodies energized? NO couch potatoes allowed! There are many activities that kids can do to help keep them fit while having fun during the fall and winter months.

First of all, just because the temperature drops does not mean that outside activities have to cease. Just remember to wear warm layers of clothing, drink water with increasing activity and wear sunscreen. Here are some outdoor activities to enjoy in the fall that is fun for all ages:

- Enjoy the beautiful foliage on a walk or hike.
- Rake leaves and play in the piles.
- Visit a pumpkin patch to select the perfect pumpkins.
- Visit a corn maze.
- Try a holiday race like a “Turkey Trot” 5k walk or run.

When the snow starts to fall try these fun activities:

- Snowshoeing around your yard or out on a golf course.
- Ice skating at an indoor rink or at an outdoor rink at a shopping area or mountain area.
- Sledding on your favorite hill in town.
- Build a snowman.
- Go cross country skiing.
- Have a snowball fight and make snow angels.
- Help your neighbors by shoveling their snow.

There are always cold, wet, snowy days that require everyone to be inside for the day. Again, parents can encourage kids to be active while inside the home. The following are a few ideas to help keep kids moving while using their imaginations and their brains.

- Play Twister or Charades.
- Play other board games or card games.
- Let friends come over to build forts with blankets and the furniture.
- Provide a small, open, safe area in the basement to play a friendly game of dodge ball with soft, foam balls or paper-ball basketball.
- Set up a crochet course with various items in the house.
- Use a large blanket as a parachute that kids go under and “popcorn” stuffed animals on top.

In addition, if there is an internet connection in the home, go to www.youtube.com and search “Zumba Kids.” There are a number of video dances that kids can do with fun music, interesting background and dance leaders, who are kids. The site is done by Family Friendly Gaming, so the dances and music are age appropriate. The site looks very much like what kids would see if they were playing on an Xbox. So, a couple of kids can watch and perform the dances from the computer screen, iPad or Kindle Fire. Even better, would be to be able to hook up a projector to the computer and have the screen be life size on a wall, then the whole house can boogey down.

For more ideas about fitness activity, nutrition and recipes visit: <http://www.liveeatplay.colostate.edu>



What's Been Happening

Diabetes Webinars: GPA Extension has recruited experts to present topics related to diabetes and diet, physical activity, kidney health and foot care as free webinars available throughout Colorado. The first one held in January, featured Dr. Colby Jolly from Haxtun Family Medicine on Weight Management for Prevention and Treatment of Diabetes. The second webinar was presented in April on Diabetes and Exercise by Barry Braun, Ph.D., Colorado State University Department of Health and Exercise Science. In short, he explained how research is proving that exercise is medicine...for people with diabetes! The third program in September was on Kidney Smart. You can view the archived video files at <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/foodnut/diabetes-webinars.html>. And, the next is set for November 5th on Neuropathy and Foot Care for Diabetes.

Babysitting Basics Training Class was held on October 24, 2015 from 9 am to 3 pm at the Phillips County Event Center. Participants learn how to recognize and manage common illnesses, emergency and safety concerns for young children. Participants are instructed in basic CPR and first aid. In addition, they learn about child development and how to plan for the business aspects of babysitting.



PHIT Programs: The WRAC and Yuma County Extension partner each spring and fall to provide two six week after school programs – Kit PHIT and MyPHIT. 42 Kindergarten through 4th grade children are currently attending Kid PHIT. They learn about the importance of being physically active and eating healthy. They also participate in hands-on preparation of healthy snacks and share a handout with their family that helps reinforce the messages they receive each week about health and wellness. MyPHIT is for 5th through 8th graders and involves volunteers from the local police department and guest speakers. MyPHIT helps reinforce healthy eating, being active, and promotes cooking skills along with learning how to be a healthy mentor. 11 children are participating in the current session. They are learning about kitchen and food safety, resistance exercise, food labels, and the impact current health habits have later in life. They are demonstrating their mentor skills by developing green screen ads related to healthy eating and fitness that will be shared with the Kid Phit group and will end the session with a team Iron Chef healthy snack food challenge.

Upcoming Events!

Zumba classes in Haxtun at Haxtun High School Gym at 6 pm Monday and Wednesday nights. \$5 a session or 8 session punch card for \$30. Call Tracy at Phillips County Extension at 970-854-3616 for more information.

Matter of Balance – Volunteer Coaches Training – November 18th at Yuma Fairgrounds Concession Building, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. A Matter of Balance program helps people manage their concerns about falling and increase physical activity to avoid falls. Call your county Extension Office for more information. Registrations due Nov. 11th.

Cooking Matters for Adults – Akron – November 3, 5, 10, 12, 17, & 19 – adults engage in participatory cooking classes designed to empower them to get the most nutrition out of their limited budgets. Call 970-345-2287 for info.

Healthy Holidays Program – December 1st, 5 p.m. at Encore in Wray



T-Shirt Quilt Class series – Nov. 9, Jan. 11, Feb. 8, and March 14 – 6-8 p.m. at the Washington County Courthouse Annex. Contact Gisele Jefferson at 970-345-2287 for more information. We started in October and can add people in November – then class is closed. \$25 fee. Sew a person's favorite t-shirts into a special memory quilt!



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