A Healthier Weigh in 2017
…12-Week Health & Fitness Challenge

As you get through the business of the holidays, are you ready to focus on making 2017 a healthier and more fulfilling year? Let’s start with recharging of our personal health and energy. How about getting a few family or friends involved in a challenge to improve our health and fitness? This individual and team challenge is just the ticket!

Developed by Colorado State University extension agents in Northeast Colorado, A Healthier Weigh Health and Fitness Challenge has earned awards on the state, regional and national levels. This 12-week challenge for adult teams and individuals has been conducted every January through April, in seven counties in northeast Colorado by a team of Family and Consumer Science extension agents with 2017 being the 11th year! The program is accessed via websites and email to participants, making it easier for people to access on their own schedule 24/7. It is available now in English and Spanish.

Over the course of nine completed challenges, 1817 adults, both male and female, have participated in this 12-week nutrition and fitness program. Looking at all ten years of the program, program participants who complete the 12-week challenge have averaged weight loss averaging 4 percent of body weight, and reduced their waist measurements by 5 percent as a result of the program. Each year the end of challenge surveys have numerous self-reported health benefits, such as: better sleep, lower cholesterol, reduced blood pressure, more energy, lower blood glucose, lower stress level, and less knee or hip pain, just to name a few.

The agents currently conducting the challenge are Joy Akey for Yuma and Kit Carson Counties, Jennifer Cooney for Morgan County, Tara Friend for Logan County, Gisele Jefferson for Washington County and Tracy Trumper for Phillips and Sedgwick Counties. Contact the Extension agents or websites for more information!
Screen Time for Your Children

As we approach the holiday break, with cold weather and school out, our kids often turn towards television and computers to fill in their time. While sometimes a relief during the busy season, it’s good to keep in mind how much screen time is too much screen time. The American Academy of Pediatrics discourages media use by children younger than 18 to 24 months. For children ages 2 to 5, it is recommended that screen time be limited to one hour a day.

One of the main reasons for limiting screen time for your child is that unstructured playtime is more valuable for a young child’s developing brain than is electronic media. While some programming can be educational, children under two are still more likely to learn and remember information from play, reading and problem-solving.

As your child grows, keep in mind that too much or poor quality screen time has been linked to: obesity, irregular sleep schedules and shorter duration of sleep, behavioral problems, loss of social skills, violence, or less time for play.

Is Your Teen Stressed?

A teen’s life may seem pretty easygoing to us, but recent findings suggest an even larger number of high school and college students are dealing with mental anxiety compared to teens from the Great Depression era. According to a study involving over 77,000 high school and college students, today’s students show five times more signs of mental stress and anxiety compared to those in 1938. Increases in some categories were even more significant. Depression increased from 1% to 6% percent, hypomania (persistent and elevated state of anxiety) rose from 5% to 31% and psychopathic deviation (a feeling of entitlement and as though rules don’t apply) increased from 5% to 24%.

What’s causing the high rates of stress? More emphasis on external factors, such as wealth and personal appearance, and pressure to succeed in a fast-paced, technology-driven world may be main factors. Unbeknown by many parents, stress related to school and family finances are a big reason as well. In fact, school is the number one cause with college acceptance and deciding what to do after high school as second.

According to the study, parents are also under-estimating the effects stress is having on today’s youth. 39% of teens reported experiencing sleeping issues, 30% stress-related headaches and 27% a change in appetite.

Although stress is a part of everyday life, we can help our teens reduce or alleviate anxiety and find effective stress-management methods that work for them. It’s important to remember stress management skills work best when they are used regularly and practiced during relatively calm times instead of just when stress is at a high, challenging level.

Here are some things for your teen to keep in mind that may help:

- **Don’t overschedule.** Encourage your teen to consider cutting back to just the activities most important to them if they are feeling stretched.
- **Be realistic.** No one is perfect, so don’t try to be. Expecting perfection of others or yourself adds to stress levels (for everyone!). Ask for help with something if you need it.
- **Let yourself shine.** Spend some time really thinking about what you are good at and enjoy and find ways to do more. If you’re a pro at math, tutor a younger student who is having trouble; if you’re artistic, take a photography or painting class. Focus on your strengths to help keep stresses in perspective.
- **Get a good night’s sleep.** Sleep is key for both physical and emotional well-being. Adequate sleep helps keep our bodies and minds functioning at their best and better equipped to deal with any negative stressors. Teens need between 9-10 hours. A consistent sleep and wake cycle is important too.
- **Learn to relax.** Our body’s natural relaxation response creates a sense of well-being and calm. Help trigger that response by learning simple breathing exercises and using them during stressful situations. It’s also important to regularly schedule time in the day for activities that are calming and pleasurable – read a good book, enjoy a hobby, spend time with your pet, draw, and listen to music. *(Continued…)*
- **Treat your body well.** Regular exercise helps us manage stress, and making healthy food choices gives our body the right fuel to function at its best. Stress puts extra demands on our body so it’s more important than ever to take care of yourself.

- **Watch your thoughts.** Outlook, attitude and thoughts influence how we see things. Is your cup half full or half empty? Optimism can make the best of stressful times. Learning to see things in a more positive light can reap great benefits.

- **Solve the small stuff.** Learning how to solve everyday problems can help create a sense of control. Avoiding them, however, can just add stress. Work on skills to calmly look at a problem, figure out options, and act on doing something to solve it.

- **Talk to someone.** It’s so much easier to manage stress when you let others help. Just talking it through with a parent, teacher, or trusted adult or professional psychologist may help provide another perspective and helpful ways to manage stress.

*Source: Kidshealth.org; familyeducation.com; apa.org*

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**Dieting versus Non-Dieting Approach**

Tired of starting off every year with the diet you are sure will be the answer, only to start over again next year? Make your resolution for 2017 be to NOT DIET. This year focus less on calories and more on feeling good and being healthy!

A Dieting Approach is an all-or-nothing view focusing on numbers and temporary goals. It involves rules and limits, judgmental statements, and eating or not eating depending on what you think you should do, rather than what you want to do.

A Non-Dieting Approach, on the other hand, means trusting your body and listening to your instincts. You focus on hunger and fullness, caring about your health, and being physically active because it makes you feel good. It is realizing happiness involves a healthy lifestyle rather than a certain weight.

In today’s society, it’s difficult to get away from a Dieting Approach, so be cautious. Any diet plans, pills or miracle products that make the following claims should be a red flag:

- **A Quick Fix** – These gimmicks usually suggest going to extreme measures to get immediate results. They can be ineffective and dangerous. Weight loss of ½ to 2 pounds per week is an effective approach for weight loss and helps avoid muscle, bone, and water loss which is common with rapid weight loss diets.

- **Eliminating Food Groups** – Diets that eliminate complete categories of food can result in nutrient deficiencies. For example, some plans tell you to avoid dairy, all grains, or all fats. Unless you have a medical reason, such as a food allergy or intolerance, it is not recommended to eliminate an entire food group. A healthy diet can include all foods in moderation.

- **Food Combining** – Some diets claim certain foods should not be eaten together and require separating or eliminating them. Our bodies can digest all foods. In fact, we often absorb more nutrients when a variety of foods are eaten together because they promote the absorption of each other.

- **Detox Diets** – These diets claim to remove harmful toxins and promote weight loss. These “cleanses” are not scientifically proven and normally result in water loss only. Our bodies are very efficient at cleansing itself. Eating a “clean” diet of whole foods with limited or no processed items is a better approach.

Choose to make an adjustment in 2017 and use a Non-Dieting approach instead! Need a little extra help achieving your goals? Consider registering for A Healthier Weigh health challenge. Grab some friends and join us for a fun way to learn more about incorporating healthier foods and increasing physical activity. (More information in this newsletter.)

*Source: Adapted from “Nutrition Connection,” Kendall Anderson Nutrition Center, January 2016*
Achieving a Healthier Lifestyle through Health Screenings

Every New Year resolutions are made to lose weight, eat healthier, and live healthier lifestyles, but the first step to making positive lifestyle changes is to make it personal; and ask yourself “Am I healthy?” in a holistic sense. Can you get out and enjoy being active without gasping for breath or experiencing pain in your muscles or joints? What are your numbers – pulse rate, blood pressure, cholesterol, blood glucose? Maybe you have recently been diagnosed with high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or pre-diabetes. Maybe you’ve had an injury and found your recovery to be slower and more challenging than you anticipated. Your weight or lifestyle could be a contributing factor. Let’s take a few minutes to have an honest talk with ourselves about our current health and lifestyle.

Chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, cancer, and diabetes are among the most prevalent, costly, and preventable of all health problems. Leading a healthy lifestyle (avoiding tobacco use, being physically active, and eating well) greatly reduces a person’s risk for developing chronic disease.

Look at the table for the leading causes of death in Colorado. Age and family history, key risk factors such as diet, exercise, smoking, obesity and other lifestyle habits play a role in the development of chronic diseases. Not only is it important to recognize the risk factors, but staying on top of your health must also include an annual check-up and regular health screenings recommended according to your age, medical history and family history. By ignoring this very important recommendation from doctors, you could be putting your life in jeopardy. Everyone should receive the following health screenings: skin cancer, colonoscopy, blood work, and eye exam.

- Health screenings specifically for women include: cervical cancer, thyroid or TSH, mammogram, and bone density.
- Health screenings specifically for men include: abdominal aortic aneurysm and prostate specific antigen testing.

For more information visit: Mayo Clinic- More Information on Health Screenings - http://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures
National Institutes of Health – Health Information: http://health.nih.gov/

Leading Causes of Death – Colorado 2013
1. Cancer
2. Heart Disease
3. Unintentional injuries
4. Chronic lower respiratory diseases
5. Cerebrovascular diseases (strokes)
6. Alzheimer’s disease
7. Suicide
8. Diabetes mellitus
9. Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis
10. Influenza and pneumonia

Health and Blue Light

Does blue light from LED lighting and electronics cause any health concerns? Yes and No…

Digital eyestrain refers to blurred vision and other symptoms such as burning, stinging or tearing of the eyes associated with prolongs use of digital devices.

Blue light triggers the suppression of melatonin in the brain, keeping us awake. People of all ages would get better sleep and REM sleep by turning off devices one or two hours before going to bed.

Cozy Up with Ancient Grains this Winter

On a cold and frosty winter morning, what better way to start the day than with a steaming bowl of creamy hot cereal? Topped with nuts, dried fruit, milk, and perhaps a cup of coffee on the side, this is a simple pleasure that is also great for our health.

This winter, branch out from the classic oatmeal and try some wonderful new grains. Many are grown right here in Colorado, such as millet and quinoa. These ancient grains, along with teff, buckwheat, amaranth, and sorghum offer great taste, nutrition, sustainability, and even a link to the past.

An ancient (or heirloom) grain is one that has not changed for hundreds, or even thousands, of years. Farming began about 12,000 years ago, but some early humans may have been eating wild grains as far back as 100,000 years ago!

Whole ancient grains, like all whole grains, are a good source of many nutrients. Protein, fiber, B vitamins, and some minerals are in most whole grains. However, grains vary when it comes to some nutrients, so it is best to eat a variety of different ones. For example, teff is an excellent source of manganese, quinoa is an excellent source of folic acid, and buckwheat is an excellent source of magnesium. Additionally, many ancient grains are gluten-free and good options for those who cannot eat gluten.

Ancient grains can also play a starring role in a more sustainable food system. Currently, 60% of the world’s calories come from only five cereal grains: rice, bread wheat, maize, millet, and sorghum. Social, technological, and economic factors have led to a global diet that has much less variety than in the past. Growing only a small number of varieties means our food supply is at greater risk from pests, disease, and extreme weather. Ancient grains often require less pesticide, fertilizer, and water than modern varieties, and can often grow well in extreme weather conditions. Choosing a variety of grains can be a great choice for food security, the environment, and our health. Not to mention, they are a great choice for our taste buds!

Ideas for cooking with ancient grains: For a quick breakfast, soak your grains overnight in the refrigerator before you go to bed, and they will cook more quickly in the morning. Try buckwheat, barley, millet, or a multi-grain mixture as fresh alternatives to oatmeal. Serve whole grains with roasted winter root vegetables such as carrots, beets, parsnips, and turnips. Use ancient grain flours when baking. For example, try buckwheat in pancakes or spelt in muffins. Try heirloom varieties of old favorites, such as tri-color popcorn for a nutritious snack or red rice to add flare to your dinner.

Stay warm this winter by enjoying more whole ancient grains and reap the benefits they have to offer! To learn more about whole grains, visit the Eat Live Play Colorado website at http://www.liveeatplay.colostate.edu/eat/nutrition101/foods-a-z/whole-grains.php.

Source: Adapted from “News You Can Use,” Colorado State University Extension, February 2017

Additional resources:


Energy Bill Blues?

Has your energy bill increased? Energy costs can be a financial burden for rural families, especially in the winter months because of space heating. Although most try to monitor their energy costs through reducing heat, studies show 26 percent of energy costs in an average Colorado home are from appliances, electronics, and lighting. Appliances can be expensive and use considerable amounts of energy, so here are a few tips to help reduce your energy use and save money:

- Maintain your refrigerator at 35-38 degrees F and your freezer at 0-5 degrees F.
- Maintain stand-alone freezers at 0 F.
- Keep your refrigerator and freezer doors closed whenever possible.
- Regularly clean dust out of the coils behind or under your refrigerator.
- Minimize freezer ice build-up.
- Use microwave ovens for cooking small meals.
- Adjust the flame on gas cooking appliances so it is blue, not yellow.
- If you have a newer dishwasher, skip pre-rinsing the dishes.
- Run the dishwasher only with a full load.
- Air dry dishes in your dishwasher.
- Regularly clean the lint filter on your dryer and inspect the dryer vent to make sure it is not blocked.
- Do not overload your dryer as it takes clothes longer to dry.
- Shut down home computers or put them in sleep mode when not in use.
- Plug small electronics into a power strip so you can turn them all off at the same time.
- Turn off the TV when no one is viewing it.
- Select appliances such as coffee pots that have time-limited shut off switches.
- Replace aging appliances, when needed, with energy efficient Energy Star models.
- Compare the annual energy consumption and operating costs for each appliance being considered by looking at the bright yellow Energy Guide labels.

For more information visit: Your Energy Colorado, [http://yourenergy.extension.colostate.edu/at-home/](http://yourenergy.extension.colostate.edu/at-home/)

Running a Marathon or Managing Money

Practicing the habits of managing money is similar to becoming physically fit. It is comparable to running a race such as a marathon. It doesn’t happen overnight. Your time and your money are both limited resources. It takes training to become physically fit to run a marathon; similarly, it takes time, attention and focus to become financially fit for the lifestyle you want to lead. Neither one happens unless you develop and execute a plan.

When planning to run a marathon, you chart your workouts. You come up with strategies that help improve your stamina and strength. Eventually, you are able to run for a long time. Think about the workouts that will enhance your financial fitness over the long haul. You will need to design a plan and use different strategies so that you build a foundation for a lifetime of financial security.

Plan your workout: 1 – Set yearly goals; 2 – Take control of your spending; 3 – Make savings automatic; 4 – Avoid debt; and 5 – Make money work for you by investing

Read the full article at: [http://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/family-financial-stability/running-marathon-managing-money/](http://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/family-financial-stability/running-marathon-managing-money/)
Upcoming Events!

New Year’s Day -- County Offices closed for holiday observance on January 2nd – Happy New Year!

A Healthier Weigh Fitness Challenge- Weigh-ins the week of January 2nd. Program starts Monday, January 9th. Call your County Extension office to get program information and registration packets.

- Kit Carson County AHW Weigh-in, Kit Carson County Extension Office, Burlington – Wednesday, January 4 – 11:30 – 1:00
- Yuma County AHW Weigh-in, WRAC, Wray – Thursday, January 5 & Friday January 6 – 11:30 -1:00 & 5:00 – 6:00
- Yuma County Face-to-Face Lessons for AHW (all will be at the WRAC) – January 19, Noon – 1:00; February 2, 5:30 – 6:30; February 16, Noon – 1:00; March 2, 5:30 – 6:30; March 16, Noon – 1:00; March 30, 5:30 – 6:30
- Washington County AHW Weigh-In – Friday, January 6th, Extension Meeting Room, 7 a.m. – 5 p.m.
- Logan County AHW Weigh-In – January 3rd, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., options by appointment. Call 970-522-3200, Ext. 2
- Morgan County AHW Weigh-In – January 3rd or 5th, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m., Extension Office
- Phillips County AHW Weigh-In – January 4, 5 & 6, schedule appointment with Tracy.
- Sedgwick County AHW Weigh-In – Contact Tracy for scheduling.

Strong People Stay Healthy – new class beginning January 3rd in Akron, Tuesday & Thursday, 9 a.m.; and February 7th in Fort Morgan – contact Jennifer for more information 970-542-3544.

National Western Stock Show/ Agricultural Awareness – Morgan County School Programs- January 9th-12th

January 18 – Washington County Health Council Luncheon – Akron Senior Center, “Going Green in 2017”

Zumba classes Monday and Wednesday evenings from 6 to 7pm at Haxtun High School Gym starting January 2nd. Join the first week to receive a free 8 session punch card! Call Tracy 970-854-3616 for more information.

January 26 – Yuma County Extension Office Open House -- Visit our office, meet our staff, and discover the multitude of programs and research-based information we have to offer. Call the Yuma County Extension office at 332-4151 for more details.

Diabetes Webinar – February 2, Noon – 1:00 – Lifestyle Modifications and Management Skills, Dr. William Polonsky, University of California Behavioral Diabetes Institute. Call your local Extension Office for host site information.

America Saves Week – February 27-March 4 – Be watching for more information!

ServSafe Food Handlers Training – March 9, Brush, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm.

Kid Phit Afterschool Program – January 31, February 7, February 14, February 21, February 28, March 7 – WRAC, Wray, 4:00 – 5:30

My Phit Afterschool Program – February 1, 8, 15, 22, March 1, 8 – WRAC, Wray, 3:45 – 5:15

Additional Yuma County School Programs: Head Start Nutrition Lessons, INEP Nutrition Lessons (K-4th, Wray Elementary)