

# Family Ties

August 2006



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Northwest Area Family Newsletter  
Prepared by Rhonda Rosenboom, Nancy Clark, Phyllis Zylinski  
ISUE Family Specialists

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## *Time with Grandparents Still Can Be Grand*

Being a grandparent is not what it used to be.

Today's grandparents often are still working, either full or part-time. They may be caregivers for their own parents. The grandchildren may live far away or be in varied living situations, or even live with the grandparent's part or all of the time. Some or all of the grandchildren may be step-grandchildren.

No matter the circumstances, grandparents remain a vital connection between the past and the future. They can make a positive difference in the lives of their grandchildren. With a little effort and time, you, too, can begin building relationships and making memories with your grandchildren.

Here are a few suggestions for becoming a "grand" grandparent.

- Listen and talk to your grandchildren. Ask what they are thinking, saying and feeling. Really tune in to what is going on in their lives.
- Love your grandchildren just as they are. Don't impose your expectations or make comparisons.
- Treat all the grandchildren as special. Accept them as individuals and work at making a connection with each one. Children (and their parents) quickly notice any preferential treatment.
- Set a good example. Model the values you would want your grandchildren to embrace.

- Leave the discipline to the parents. If you keep the grandchildren involved and give them attention, there likely will be little misbehavior.
- Teach skills. Share a hobby. Show your grandchildren how to plant flowers, swing a golf club, whistle a tune, dance the two-step or fly a kite. Just tailor the list to suit the grandchildren's ages and your interests.
- Tell stories and pass on family history. Even young grandparents had a childhood different from today's children. Grandchildren love to hear stories about when you were growing up and about their parents.
- Support the parents. Offer encouragement, not unasked-for advice. Volunteer to take the grandchildren for an afternoon, evening or weekend to give the parents a break.

Parents, too, can help foster grandparent-grandchildren relationships. Let children have special one-on-one time with their grandparents. Gracefully accept differences in house rules and understand that occasional variations in

eating habits, bedtime hours or other routines will not be harmful.



Grand parenting takes time and effort. But it is one of the greatest roles you will play, and the payoff is priceless.

## *Meals-in-a-Box*

When it comes to dinner time, food shoppers say that speed and ease in preparation are the most important considerations when buying food. It's no wonder that convenience, in the form of meals-in-a-box, has become a popular grocery store item. The trade off for convenience however, is that these box mixes are expensive and provide nutrients that are high in sodium and fat. Most Americans need to eat less of these nutrients to be healthy.

Instead of buying these box mixes, try preparing your own mixes at home. Not only will they save you time and money, but you can control what goes into the mix for better nutrition.

## Homemade Ground Beef Helper

- 2 cups nonfat dry “instant” milk
- 1 cup cornstarch
- ¼ cup unsalted chicken or beef bouillon powder
- 2 Tbsp. onion flakes
- 1 tsp. dried basil
- 1 tsp. dried thyme
- 1 tsp. black pepper
- 2 Tbsp. dried parsley
- 1 Tbsp. garlic powder

Mix the ingredients together and store in an air tight container.

Use the “Helper” mix as a base for the following dinners. (Each serves 4-6 people)

### Chili Tomato Mac

Brown one pound ground beef or turkey and drain the fat. Add:

- 1 cup water
- 1 ½ cups uncooked macaroni
- 2 (15-oz) cans chopped tomatoes
- 1 Tbsp. chili powder
- ½ cup “Helper” mix

Simmer, covered 20 minutes or until macaroni is tender.

### Ground Beef Stroganoff

Brown one pound ground beef or turkey and drain the fat. Add:

- 2 cups water
- ½ cup “Helper” mix
- 2 cups uncooked egg noodles

Stir. Bring mixture to a boil, reduce heat and simmer covered for 15-20 minutes or until noodles are tender. Top with ½ cup “light” sour cream or plain yogurt. Serve immediately.

### Hearty Potato Casserole

Brown one pound ground beef or turkey and drain the fat. Add:

- ¾ cup water
- 6 peeled potatoes (sliced very thin)
- 1 cup of frozen mixed peas and carrots
- ½ cup plus 1 Tbsp. “Helper” mix

Simmer covered 20-30 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Stir, uncovered and cook until excess water is evaporated.

## Skillet Lasagna

In a large skillet, brown one pound of lean ground beef, crumble. Drain off the fat and add:

- ½ cup “Helper” mix
- one chopped onion
- 2 cups water
- 16 ounces tomato sauce
- 3 cups uncooked noodles
- ¼ cup Parmesan cheese

Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes, stirring until thickened. Top with 2 cups of mozzarella cheese five minutes before serving; turn off heat, stop stirring and allow cheese to melt.



## *Eat to Compete – Sports Nutrition Resources*

Athletic performance depends on talent and practice but is greatly influenced by adequate fluid intake, nutrition and possible supplement use.

Iowa State University Extension is making available a variety of resources to help get this message to teen athletes, their parents and other adults who work with them.

The following publications can be ordered (free) through your county Extension Office or directly from our publications web site ([www.extension.iastate.edu/pubs](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/pubs)) <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/store/ListItems.aspx?Keyword=Eat%20to%20Compete>

PM 1965 a Eat to Compete: What you should know about fluids

PM 1965 b Eat to Compete: What you should know about dietary supplements

PM 1965 c Eat to Compete: What you should know about training diets

## *Presentation for parents, coaches and the teen athlete.*

A presentation with activities and handouts is available for parents and coaches along with the teen athletes. The presentation, made by Nutrition Field Specialists, would be an hour long and have participants involved in activities. Contact Nancy Clark, 515-295-2469, [nanclark@iastate.edu](mailto:nanclark@iastate.edu) for questions or to make arrangements for a presentation.

## *Saving Money on Travel*

Want to have a great vacation? The key is to plan ahead. Whether you want to take a trip across the country or just spend time at a nearby campground, planning ahead will get you there with lower costs and less time spent worrying about how to pay the bills when you get back home. Keep these points in mind as you plan your vacation.

Plan as much in advance as possible. The further in advance you choose your dates, the better your chances are of getting inexpensive travel deals. Research the peak and off-peak rates for your vacation destination.

Adjust your travel schedule to take advantage of discount travel packages. Buy your vacation travel package from a business you know and deal with businesses that belong to a professional association such as the American Society of Travel Agents, the National Tour Association, or the United States Tour Operators Association.

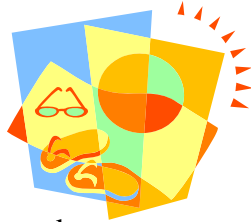
Compare low-cost carriers with major carriers that fly to your destination. Remember, the best fares may not be out of the airport closest to you. Check airline and Internet travel sites for special deals. Be flexible with the days of the week and times of day you fly to get the lowest fare.

Car rental rates can vary greatly. Compare total price (including taxes and surcharge) and take advantage of any special offers and membership discounts.

Plan and pack carefully. It is wise to make a list of travel wants and needs. It is very expensive to buy your necessities at tourist locations.

If you decide to drive on your vacation, check the condition of your vehicle, including tires, fluids, belts, brakes, and battery. Maintenance is always less expensive than emergency road service.

Consider these ideas for additional ways to save on vacation costs:



- Pack simple meals and snacks instead of buying all food from restaurants.
- Buy items for children and souvenirs from discount stores instead of tourist attractions.
- Purchase or borrow a guidebook about the place(s) you are visiting so you know in advance the least expensive times to visit museums and entertainment parks.

## *Using Credit Wisely When Traveling*

When traveling, credit cards can be used for many expenses from airline tickets to gasoline to souvenirs. Even though credit cards are a convenience, it is important to be careful with those cards to avoid problems.

Below are some travel credit card tips:

Credit cards offer more protection than cash. If you lose a credit card your maximum liability is \$50 per card if someone uses your card fraudulently.

Take a list of all credit cards, addresses of the issuers and account numbers with you on the trip in case they are lost or stolen, but do not keep them in your wallet. If your card is lost, report it immediately and ask for another number. If you call before it is used fraudulently, your liability is zero.

Use only two major credit cards – one for rental cars, hotels and personal expenses, and the other as a backup for emergencies. Remember that hotels and car rental companies usually place a block on your card for anticipated charges. You may be told you are over your credit limit even when you know you are not.

Never leave credit cards, cash or other valuable items in a hotel room. Some rooms now offer safes so use them if they are available.

Iowa State University and U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating Extension programs are available to all without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age or disability.