

# IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

University Extension

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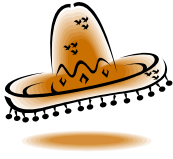
## Extension Family Insights

*July-August 2009*

# FIESTA FUN!

## Kids Day at the Washington County Fair

The first 200 youth will receive a free souvenir!



### ACTIVITIES

- SOMBRERO COOKIES: Join the Fiesta with a fun treat.
- DESIGN YOUR OWN MARACA: Shake yourself silly and decorate your own wooden maraca to take home.
- CACTUS LIMBO: How low can you go? Come and find out!
- FIESTA MAGNET: Create your own fiesta magnet to take home.
- CACTUS RING TOSS: Think you can get the ring on the cactus?
- FIESTA DUCK DIVE: Choose a duck from the pond and win a prize!

### SPECIAL EVENTS:

- Entertainment on small stage: 10:30-11:00 a.m.
- Piñatas: Come join the piñata fun at 10:00, 10:30, 11:00, and 11:30 a.m.



**Wednesday, July 22**  
**9:30 a.m. - Noon**

Special thanks to our sponsor People's Savings Bank of Crawfordsville and Wayland.

Gene Mohling, Washington County Extension Education Director

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# Family Matters

July-August 2009

Summer is a wonderful time of year but can be challenging for parents with children. Schedules can get very hectic. It's important that children have unstructured time to think, dream, read and explore. Outdoor time is very important. Children can learn a lot outside in nature. This summer try to plan fun outdoor activities with children in your care.

*Mary Crooks*

*Mary Crooks*  
*Field Specialist/Family Life*

## **Children benefit from time in nature**

Kids and the outdoors seem like a natural combination. But today's children spend only about half an hour each week in unstructured play outside — and that's just not enough.

Kids need unstructured time to explore nature at their own pace. While they're at it, they'll develop their observation skills and reduce their stress levels.

Too often busy schedules, fears about safety and the lure of technology keep children away from nature. A growing number of educators and others who work with children are becoming increasingly concerned about this trend away from children having outdoor time.

Karen DeBord, a child development specialist at North Carolina State University, reports research showing that the strongest indicator of children's physical fitness is time spent outdoors. She cites the U.S. Surgeon General's recommendation that children need one hour of vigorous physical activity each day. Often this is most easily achieved when children spend time outside.

Another benefit of children's time outdoors in the natural world is increased attention span. Research shows that children's symptoms of attention deficit disorders decrease when they spend time in nature. In nature's calming

environment, children develop their skills at observing things closely — an important part of science skills.

Children's time in nature helps to reduce negative behaviors, as well. Children are less impulsive and have fewer behavior problems when they spend time outdoors. Nature offers opportunities to develop nurturing skills, such as caring for plants in a garden or feeding birds.

Adults can do several things to offer more opportunity for children to spend time outdoors in natural settings. Here are some suggestions:

- Take a walk and carry along a bag to collect nature items.
- Plant some seeds and watch them grow.
- Notice the sights and sounds and talk about what you see and hear.
- Use chalk to draw on the sidewalk.
- Smell flowers and plants.
- Play with blocks and other building materials outside.
- Use paper and drawing materials to create some nature art.
- Create a special place for children to dig in the dirt outside.
- Take musical instruments and materials outside. Let kids bang on a pot or hit sticks together to create sounds.
- Take a blanket outdoors and read books with children.
- Bury some items in a sand box and let children find them as they would in an archeological dig.

"When you spend time outdoors with children be curious. Notice things like bugs and trees and comment on them. Ask questions and listen to children's answers. Invite children to explore and learn from nature by touching, smelling and listening.

There also is a long-term benefit to time outdoors. Children who spend time in nature are more likely to care for the earth as they grow and become adults. They are more likely to be good caretakers of the natural world.

# Food for Thought

July August 2009

Good day!

Check out an internet resource you can trust – e-~~X~~-tension! [www.eXtension.org](http://www.eXtension.org) is a website that puts you in touch with over 3000 local Cooperative Extension offices with professionals who can help you in your own neighborhood. Get up-to-date answers 24/7 via any Internet connection.

*Patty Steiner*

Nutrition & Health Field Specialist

## **Blog with us at Spend Smart. Eat Smart**

If you're looking for ways to feed your family low-cost, healthy meals in a hurry, join us on the "Spend smart, eat smart" blog! We focus on sharing ideas, resources and recipes to help you feed your family for less. Contributors are ISU Extension staff members trained in food, nutrition, and health. They are everyday people facing the

same struggles as many others...to eat smart on a budget. Try our tips and recipes and share your own if you'd like. Sign up here:

<http://blogs.extension.iastate.edu/foodsavings/about/>

## **Table time topics**

Do some family members dominate dinnertime conversation while others sit and listen? Try creating a new tradition where each person chooses a topic for the family to discuss. These ideas may help you get started:

- \*What are you most looking forward to this week?
- \*What historical figure would you most want to meet?
- \*What is your ideal vacation?
- \*If you could be anywhere else right now, where would you be?

Request a set of Family Mealtime Conversation cards at your Extension office for more ideas.

## **Cantaloupe care**

Wash cantaloupe just before you eat or serve it. Use a clean vegetable brush to vigorously scrub the outside of the cantaloupe under clean running water. Refrigerate leftover cut cantaloupe within 2 hours – or toss.

## **Summer sunshine – good for you...or not?**

Go outside and play – the advice parents give to children – is more important now than ever! It's true: the human body can synthesize Vitamin D simply by being outdoors. The sun's ultraviolet radiation triggers a process which creates the active form of Vitamin D. We now know that the lack of Vitamin D is linked to diseases such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, some cancers and autoimmune disorders. But we also know that too much sunlight increases the risk of skin cancer. It's a balancing act to decide how much sun exposure to have.

Current recommendations for Vitamin D are:  
200 IU for children and adults to age 50  
400 IU for adults age 51 to 70  
600 IU for adults age 71 and older.

Recent research indicates the need for intakes of 3,500 to 4,000 IU daily to achieve optimal Vitamin D levels in the blood. That's a lot of Vitamin D! What to do?

You can get some Vitamin D from food – such as fatty fish (salmon, tuna, mackerel and herring) and eggs and foods fortified with Vitamin D, including milk and breakfast cereal. But these foods contain amounts far less than the recommended intake.

Research shows that 20 minutes of direct sunlight (between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.) will stimulate adequate Vitamin D production. But there is a concern about sunburn and skin cancer. If direct sunlight is not feasible, nutritionists recommend taking a Vitamin D supplement along with eating food with Vitamin D to achieve the recommended intake of 3,500 to 4,000 IU.  
*Source: Ruth Litchfield, (ISU Extension Nutritionist)*

# Consumer Choice

July/August 2009

It is summertime and people are planning trips to their favorite vacation spot. Travel can be expensive and the Federal Trade Commission offers some tips to help lower travel costs.

## Shifting Gears: Real Money-Saving Steps

There are numerous steps you can take to combat rising gas prices. The most important place to start is at the gas pump; buy only the octane level gas you need. All gas pumps must post the octane rating of the gas under the FTC's Fuel Rating Rule. Remember, the higher the octane, the higher the price. Here are some additional tips from the EPA to help you get better gas mileage.

### Drive more efficiently

- Stay within posted speed limits. The faster you drive, the more fuel you use. For example, driving at 65 miles per hour (mph), rather than 55 mph, increases fuel consumption by 20 percent. Driving at 75 mph, rather than 65 mph, increases fuel consumption by another 25 percent.
- Use cruise control. Using cruise control on highway trips can help you maintain a constant speed and, in most cases, reduce your fuel consumption.
- Anticipate driving situations. If you anticipate traffic conditions and don't tailgate, you can avoid unnecessary braking and acceleration, and improve your fuel economy by 5 to 10 percent. In city driving, nearly 50 percent of the energy needed to power your car goes to acceleration. Go easy on the gas pedal and brakes. "Jack-rabbit" starts and sudden stops are wasteful.

Avoid unnecessary idling. Turn off the engine if you anticipate a lengthy wait. No matter how efficient your car is, unnecessary idling wastes fuel, costs you money and pollutes the air.

- Combine errands. Several short trips taken from a cold start can use twice as much fuel as one trip covering the same distance when the engine is warm.
- Remove excess weight from the trunk. Avoid carrying unneeded items, especially heavy ones.



An extra 100 pounds in the trunk reduces a typical car's fuel economy by one to two percent.

- Keep your engine tuned. Studies have shown that a poorly tuned engine can increase fuel consumption by as much as 10 to 20 percent depending on a car's condition. Follow the recommended maintenance schedule in your owner's manual; you'll save fuel and your car will run better and last longer.
- Keep your tires properly inflated and aligned. Car manufacturers must place a label in the car stating the correct tire pressure. The label usually is on the edge of the door or door jamb, in the glove box, or on the inside of the gas cap cover. If the label lists a psi (pounds per square inch) range, use the higher number to maximize your fuel efficiency. Underinflated tires cause fuel consumption to increase by six percent.
- Change your oil. Clean oil reduces wear caused by friction between moving parts and removes harmful substances from the engine. Change your oil as recommended by the vehicle manufacturer.
- Check and replace air filters regularly. Your car's air filter keeps impurities in the air from damaging internal engine components. Not only will replacing a dirty air filter improve your fuel economy, it also will protect your engine. Clogged filters can cause up to a 10 percent increase in fuel consumption.

### Consider buying a fuel efficient vehicle

Deciding which vehicle to buy may be the most important fuel economy decision you make. The difference between a car that gets 20 MPG (miles per gallon) and one that gets 30 MPG amounts to \$3,125 over 5 years, assuming gas costs \$2.50 per gallon and you drive 15,000 miles a year.

Visit [www.fueleconomy.gov](http://www.fueleconomy.gov) for more information. You'll find gas mileage estimates and other data from EPA for 1985-2007 model year cars.

For more information about this newsletter or to schedule financial presentations, contact Mary Weinand, FRM Specialist, ISU Extension, 319/385-8126, [mweinand@iastate.edu](mailto:mweinand@iastate.edu)