Words on Wellness

YOUR EXTENSION CONNECTION TO NUTRITION AND FITNESS

Benefits of Family Mealtime

Families who eat together are healthier and happier. Making family meals a habit will create a safe and stable environment for your family to connect and talk about their day. Family mealtime allows children to learn and practice social skills, table manners, and conversation skills. Studies have also shown that children benefit academically from family mealtime. They have increased focus on homework and read for pleasure, and they develop better language skills and vocabulary.

Typically, meals prepared at home are healthier and save the family money. Meals eaten away from home consistently contain more fat, sodium, and calories. Several studies support that regular family meals are linked to increased consumption of fruits, vegetables, grains, and other healthy food choices. These choices are also associated with a decreased risk of obesity in children. Our busy lifestyles make it a challenge to get the family together. Family meals can include quick and easy options using the crock pot or pairing carryout (pizza or chicken) with a salad or other side dish at home. The more frequently family meals occur, the greater the benefit.

Researchers recommend making family mealtime a priority at least four times a week. Keep meals simple and involve children in mealtime preparation. It's the time spent together with no distractions (TV, phone, etc.)—not a complicated, gourmet meal—that is important!

Sources:

Purdue Extension (www.eatgathergo.org/gather/benefits-of-family-mealtime)

North Dakota State University Extension (www.ag.ndsu.edu/food/health-and-nutrition/eatsmart/eat-smart.-play-hard.-magazines-1/2009-eat-smart-play-hard-magazine)

University of Florida Extension (edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/FY/FY136200.pdf)

Chicken BLT Salads

Serving Size: 1 salad | Serves: 4

Ingredients:

- 4 turkey bacon strips
- 8 cups lettuce (washed and torn into bite-sized pieces) (green leaf, iceberg, red leaf, or romaine)
- 2 cups tomatoes, chopped
- 2 cups boneless and skinless chicken breast (cooked and chopped)
- 4 tablespoons light salad dressing

Instructions:

1. Cook bacon according to package directions. Crumble or cut up into small pieces.
2. Put two cups of lettuce on each plate.
3. Top each plate of lettuce with 1 strip of bacon (about 2 tablespoons) and 1/2 cup tomatoes. Add 1/2 cup chicken and 1 tablespoon salad dressing.

Nutrition information per serving:

200 calories, 7g total fat, 1.5g saturated fat, 0g trans fat, 75mg cholesterol, 370mg sodium, 8g total carbohydrate, 3g fiber, 5g sugar

This recipe is courtesy of ISU Extension and Outreach's Spend Smart. Eat Smart. website. For more information, recipes, and videos, visit spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu.

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Raising School-Ready Readers

If you're the parent of a preschooler, you know how important it is to help young children get ready for school with lots of early learning activities. It's just hard to carve out time every day to do it! The Raising School Ready Readers program focuses on fun ways to incorporate learning into the things you already do daily. Join us for five weeks of fun and learning for you and your child. Get the skills you need to help turn everyday tasks into learning opportunities for your little one.

Polk County Extension is offering Raising School-Ready Readers classes on Tuesday mornings in July, 9:30-11:30 am, at Capitol View Elementary 320 E. 16th St, Des Moines, IA 50316. The program is FREE and will include a free lunch at Capitol View. Parents with children aged 3 to 6 years must register by contacting Michelle Maynes at 515-957-5785 or mim@iastate.edu.

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Eating Outdoors

As the weather warms up, you may be looking forward to spending more time outdoors. Unfortunately, warm weather is also an opportunity for foodborne bacteria to thrive. When planning a picnic, here are some food safety guidelines to keep in mind.

- Keep cold food cold at all times. Place food in a cooler with ice or ice packs to prevent bacterial growth.
- Limit the number of times the cooler is opened—consider placing beverages in a separate cooler to cut down on perishable food being exposed to warm air.
- If planning to grill, separate raw meat, poultry, and seafood from other foods that will be eaten raw, such as fruits and vegetables.
- Rinse fresh produce under running tap water before packing in the cooler, including those with skins and rinds (watermelon) that will not be eaten.
- Most importantly, before setting out your picnic, wash hands and the serving surface with soap and water.

Source: Food and Drug Administration (www.fda.gov/downloads/Food/FoodborneIllnessContaminants/UCM239489.pdf)

A Game for All Ages

Pickleball is one of the fastest growing sports in America. Imagine a combination of tennis, badminton, and ping pong. The game is played indoors or outdoors and as singles or doubles. Those who play the game say it is fun no matter what your skill level.

The game is increasing in popularity among all age groups, especially older Americans. The game is an excellent form of aerobic exercise for this age group because injury risk is lower. The court size is smaller and most play doubles so there is little to no running involved, which minimizes stress on the knees. The risk of tennis elbow is also less because of the lightweight paddle. The typical game lasts about 10 to 15 minutes, so players are able to take frequent breaks.

New studies on the game's health benefits suggest that regularly playing pickleball improves blood pressure, increases overall fitness, and decreases depression. Many players enjoy the social aspects of the game, which may contribute to the mental health benefits.

As always, the key to physical activity is finding something you enjoy doing. Pickleball is a fun activity that all generations can play together!

Sources:

USA Pickleball Association (www.usapa.org/what-is-pickleball)

AARP (www.aarp.org/home-family/friends-family/info-2018/pickleball-health-social-emotional-benefits.html)