

Aim To Be Healthy This Year!

By Carolyn Hendry Wyatt, Extension Agent III, Family & Consumer Science/4-H

How are you doing with your New Year's resolution to lose weight? It is midway through the year and maybe you have forgotten all about making that resolution on January 1, or maybe your enthusiasm waned when you did not see the desired results quickly, and have given up on ever achieving your goal. Well, do not despair! I want to share some thoughts about healthy weight that might help motivate you to get back on track for the remainder of the year.

First of all, focus on improving or maintaining your health and not on losing weight. Almost all of us should have as a priority to improve our health, if even just a little bit. Those who are blessed with good health certainly should want to stay healthy. How do you go about doing this? Start by choosing foods that make up a healthy eating plan. A healthy eating plan is one that gives your body the nutrients it needs everyday while staying within your daily calorie level. Foods that should be included are lower in calories, total fat--especially saturated and *trans* fat--cholesterol, and sodium (salt). Examples of these foods include fat-free and low-fat dairy products; lean meat, fish, and poultry; high-fiber foods such as whole grains, breads, and cereals; fruits; and vegetables. Canola or olive oils and soft margarines made from these oils are heart healthy and can be used in moderate amounts. Unsalted nuts can also be built into a healthy diet as long as you watch the amount.

Secondly, a healthy eating plan includes eating foods from all of the basic food groups. Try keeping a daily food diary for one week to track what you are eating at each meal. By eating whole grain foods from the grain group, fresh fruits, and vegetables, milk products from the dairy group, and lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts from the protein group, you will have included foods from all of the food groups each day, or certainly after several days.

Thirdly, a healthy eating plan certainly includes portion control. It allows for reasonable portion sizes to control our calorie intake. A reasonable portion, or serving size, is one-half cup cooked or one cup of raw fruits or vegetables; eight ounces of milk or yogurt from the dairy food group; and three ounces of cooked meat, fish, or poultry from the protein food group. Always check your food label for serving size information as a guideline for a healthy recommended portion to eat.

So, if you focus on healthy eating and portion control, reaching and maintaining a healthy weight will be easier to achieve. Some weight loss will naturally occur when all of the above ideas and guidelines are followed. Then, if you can incorporate physical activity into your daily or weekly schedule, weight loss will definitely occur and you will find maintaining a healthy weight will become easier. Most importantly, striving to become healthy has many far reaching benefits, including feeling good about yourself and having more energy to enjoy life. We know

that heart disease, high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, gallbladder disease, osteoporosis, and some types of cancer result from unhealthy eating habits throughout life.

Hopefully, you are now motivated to *begin again* with the New Year's resolution you made back in January and are now ready to *get back on track* with establishing and maintaining healthy eating habits throughout the remainder of this year. Don't become obsessive, but become watchful. You will benefit greatly and reap the benefits for a lifetime. For more information on nutrition and how to develop a healthy eating plan, call the Hardee County Extension Office at 863-773-2164. May you have a happy and healthy remainder of the year!