

March is National Nutrition Month

By

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March is National Nutrition Month. It is a great time for you and your family to try to make healthful choices each day. Here are some key messages from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the new MyPlate food guidance system. The letters BCB may help you remember the messages.

Build a healthy plate:

- Put fruits and vegetables on half your plate.
- Include a green salad with dinner every night. Add fresh vegetables that are in season, which cost less and are likely to be at their peak flavor.
- Make at least half the grains you eat whole grains, such as oats, wheat, barley, and rice.
- Replace a refined grain with a whole grain. Replace white bread with whole wheat, white rice with brown, and regular pasta with whole wheat pasta.
- Switch to fat-free or low-fat milk.
- Choose different types of protein foods like eggs, beans, nuts, and seeds.

Cut back on foods high in solid fats, added sugars, and salt:

- Limit foods that are high in solid fats like pizza, regular cheese, sausage, hotdogs, and bacon.
- Trim away all of the visible fat from meats and poultry before cooking, and drain off any fat that appears during cooking.
- Choose drinks with little or no added sugars like 100% fruit juice.
- Pack lunches with oranges, bananas or grapes, and keep a bowl of whole fruit on the table, counter, or in the refrigerator as a reminder that fruit makes a convenient and nutritious snack.
- For dessert, make sugar-free jello with fresh fruit; or sugar-free pudding with fat-free or low-fat milk.
- Read the label! Choose low-sodium canned foods or “no salt added” prepared foods.

Balance calories and be active:

- Find out how many calories your body needs at www.ChooseMyPlate.gov.
- Avoid oversized portions. When eating out, practice portion control by ordering the smallest size, splitting an entrée with a friend, or taking part of it home.
- Avoid eating food products directly out of their packages; you'll eat more without realizing it.
- Pick activities that you like and do them for at least 10 minutes at a time. Adults need 2.5 hours of activity each week and youth need 60 minutes or more each day.
- Go on a family walk or bike ride.
- Turn off the television and computer and get active by going outside and working in the yard or doing some type of physical exercise.

Don't try to do all of these at once. One small step each day can help you and your family eat well and be active. Before long, it will become a lifestyle and you will enjoy better health as a result! Contact the Hardee County Extension Office at 863-773-2164 for more information on nutrition and health.