

## **June is National Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Month!**

By

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

June is National Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Month. Celebrate by choosing a variety of fruits and veggies each day. Fruits and vegetables give you many of the nutrients that you need: vitamins, minerals, dietary fiber, water, and healthful phytochemicals. Some are sources of vitamin A, while others are rich in vitamin C, folate, or potassium. Almost all fruits and vegetables are naturally low in fat and calories and none have cholesterol. All of these healthful characteristics may protect you from getting chronic diseases, such as heart disease, stroke, and some types of cancer. Research shows that those who eat more generous amounts of fruits and vegetables, as part of a healthful diet, are likely to have a reduced risk of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, stroke, diabetes, and certain types of cancer. Everyone needs 5 to 9 daily servings of fruits and vegetables for the nutrients they contain and for general health. Here are some ideas for incorporating fruits and vegetables in your diet:

- At breakfast, top your cereal with bananas, peaches or blueberries. Drink 100% orange or grapefruit juice. Mix fruit into fat-free or low-fat yogurt.
- Put some fruit and milk in the blender and make a milkshake.
- 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.
- 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.
- Consider vegetable toppings for pizza, such as mushrooms, green peppers, or onions.
- Throw some fruits and veggies on the barbeque. Grilled pineapple tastes great when added to a chicken sandwich. Or, slice up some asparagus and zucchini, lightly brush with olive oil and cook on the grill, rotating regularly, for three to five minutes depending on thickness.
- Pile veggies on your burgers! Add juicy tomatoes, crisp lettuce, pickles and onions to your sandwiches. You will increase your servings of veggies and fill yourself up more quickly, leaving less of a chance for munching on those potato chips and desserts.

- Serve a fresh fruit and vegetable tray for appetizers at your next family get-together or patio or pool party with friends and neighbors.

Decide this summer to check your eating habits, and make sure you are eating **at least** three daily servings of vegetables and two daily servings of fruits. This should not be difficult in our area of the country where fresh fruits and vegetables are in abundance this time of year. You have a large selection of fruits and vegetables to choose from – with colors across the rainbow – so you can find a variety to eat. So, start this month--**National Fruit and Vegetable Month**--and determine to make good health and nutrition a priority. You will be glad you did! For more information, contact the Hardee County Extension Service Office at 773-2164.