Improved Health Through Diet!

If you want to lower your blood pressure, get your cholesterol down to a safe level and stay healthy for life, there is good news! You only need to follow one sensible diet.

An overwhelming amount of scientific evidence points to our diet and activity level as being the keys to better health. The bottom line is that you don’t need special drinks, supplements or designer foods. Simply limit the amount of refined carbohydrates, sodium-laden processed foods, and foods high in fat (especially saturated and trans fat) that you eat.

Replace these unhealthy food choices with a low-fat, low-sodium diet based on fruits and vegetables, whole grains and a modest amount of seafood and fat-free dairy items. Use this list to help you!

All the right stuff

Fruits
Vegetables
Unsalted nuts & seeds
Beans
Whole grains without added salt
Condiments with little or no added salt
Low-sodium whole grain bread
Canned foods without added salt
Fat-free milk, yogurt and ricotta cheese

Limit These

Cheese including most nonfat cheeses
Cured meats, imitation seafood, soy “meat”
Salty snack foods
Canned foods with added salt or “sea salt”
Condiments, sauces, dressings
Nearly all restaurant meals
Most frozen and boxed convenience meals
Bread, packaged cereals, refined grains

For more information, consult DASH diet materials at www.nhlbi.nih.gov

Source: communicating Food for Health, June 2007
15 Ways to Eat More Fruits and Veggies

We have many choices for fruits and veggies. Why not take advantage of this and eat more fruit and vegetables.

1. Have 1 cup of fruit or 100% fruit juice for **breakfast**. It will be good for your health and taste good too!
2. Take 1 cup of fruit for your mid-morning **snack**.
3. Eat at least one cup of vegetables at **lunch** (salad or vegetable soup).
4. Eat at least a cup of vegetables for **dinner**.
5. Make one **vegetarian recipe** each week; don’t be afraid to try new ones!
6. Eat a **salad** at least once a day, every day.
7. Keep **frozen veggies** on hand for quick side dishes and to throw in pasta or soup during the week.
8. Start **shopping** in the produce section of the grocery store and build your meal ideas from what you find there.
9. At least **1/3 of your grocery cart** should be from the produce section when you shop.
10. Keep **fresh and dried fruit** on hand for grab and go snacks.
11. Take **fresh fruit** with you every day for snacks.
12. If you visit a **fast-food restaurant**, order a salad instead of fries.
13. Make a **delicious fruit dessert** a couple times per week.
14. Make a **veggie stir fry** once each week and use a variety of fresh and frozen vegetables.
15. When eating, fill **1/2 of your plate** with fruits and vegetables.

Source: Communicating Food for Health, June 2007

Keep It or Toss It?

Should you “Keep” or “Toss” the following foods? Circle the correct answer.

1. Tacos left on the kitchen counter overnight? KEEP TOSS
2. Hamburger thawed all day on the kitchen counter? KEEP TOSS
3. Leftover pizza placed in the refrigerator within 2 hours after it was cooked? KEEP TOSS
4. Cut or peeled fruits and vegetables left at room temperature MORE than 2 hours? KEEP TOSS
5. Leftovers kept in the refrigerator over a week: KEEP TOSS

**ANSWERS:**

1. **TOSS**. Even if you reheat tacos left out overnight, some bacteria can form a heat-resistant toxin that cooking won’t destroy.

2. **TOSS**. Remember how bacteria may have formed heat-resistant toxins when the tacos were left out overnight? The best place to thaw frozen perishable foods - like frozen meat, poultry, seafood, vegetables, fruit and cooked pasta and rice - is in the refrigerator! Make sure your refrigerator is 40 degrees Fahrenheit or lower. Thaw packages of meat, poultry and seafood on a plate on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator. This prevents their juices from dripping on other foods.

When microwave defrosting perishable food, cook it immediately after thawing. Some areas of the food may start to cook during microwave defrosting and become warm. Any bacteria present wouldn’t have been destroyed and may reach optimal temperatures for growth.
3. **KEEP.** If perishable foods have not been left at room temperature for longer than 2 hours (1 hour in temperatures above 90°F), they should be safe. Refrigerate promptly; eat within 3 to 4 days.

4. **TOSS.** Once you have cut through the protective skin of fruits and vegetables, bacteria can enter. Refrigerate cut or peeled fruits and vegetables within TWO hours! Just 1 bacteria in foods can grow to 2,097,152 bacteria in 7 hours! Bacteria on the outside of fruits can be transferred to the inside when fruit is peeled or cut. Rinse fruits with peels—even when the peel is removed—such as melons and citrus fruits!

5. **TOSS.** Even refrigerated leftovers may become unsafe within 3 to 4 days.

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**Choose a Sharper, Stronger Onion**

When it comes to onions, think stinky. Bitter, strong, pungent onions tend to have more cancer-fighting compounds than milder, sweeter bulbs. Here are the varieties that recently tested best.

Truly, you’d do well with any kind of onion on your sandwich — they’re not only cancer-fighters but also proven artery protectors. But a Cornell researcher declared that out of the onion varieties he tested, shallots — that member of the onion family often described as a cross between onion and garlic — had the most potential to do good things for people’s bodies. The mighty shallot’s off-the-charts phenolic content gave this bulb the edge.

Here are the four onion varieties that tested best for antioxidant power:

1. Shallots
2. Western Yellow
3. New York Bold
4. Northern Red

Source: Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry 2004, Nov.3

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**Teach Children to Save**

—Deadline is July 31st!! The Okaloosa $aves Coalition is sponsoring the fourth annual Teach Children to Save project. All Youth, 18 years or younger, are eligible. Youth must set a savings goal and make a deposit into a new or existing savings account before July 31st. In addition to saving money, all participants will be eligible for an opportunity to win a $100 Savings Bond. Participating financial institutions are Beach Community Bank, Eglin Federal Credit Union, First City Bank, First National Bank of Crestview, Okaloosa County Teachers Credit Union, Vanguard and Wallace Moorehand State Farm. At least six $100 savings bonds will be awarded in September. Okaloosa Saves is a community coalition to promote building wealth (save more, decrease debt). For more information, see [http://okaloosasaves.org](http://okaloosasaves.org) or call the UF/IFAS Extension Office in Okaloosa County 850-689-5850
**Pasta Sauce**

Pasta sauce is one ingredient that can add a lot sodium to your diet. It really pays to compare labels in the food store. Consider that a half cup serving can have more than 600 mg of sodium and that most people use a cup or more on their pasta. This can easily use up almost a day’s supply of sodium for most people. Check out the Nutrition Facts label. Here are ways to lower the sodium in your pasta:

- Buy pasta sauce that claims low-sodium or no added salt.
- Mix prepared pasta sauce in equal parts with no-salt-added canned tomato sauce. This makes the cost per serving less, too.
- Use fresh diced tomatoes or no-salt-added diced canned tomatoes instead of pasta sauce.
- Low-sodium broth and fresh veggies are a great alternative, too.

Source: Communicating Food for Health, April 2007

**What to Do About Mildew**

Mildew is a mold. Mold growth requires a source of food, moisture and optimal temperatures.

**FOOD:** Molds thrive on organic materials such as paper, leather, natural fibers or surfaces coated with the slightest amount of organic matter such as food or soil.

**MOISTURE:** The optimal growth range for mildew is 70 to 93% relative humidity (RH). Listen to the local weather report and you will find we have very few days with a RH low enough to not support mold growth. RH would have to be below 62% to stop all chances for mold growth.

**TEMPERATURE:** The optimal growth temperature range for molds is 77 degrees to 88 degrees Fahrenheit, though some growth may occur anywhere between 32 to 95 degrees Fahrenheit.

The conditions we have in Florida make us the perfect place for mold growth. Mold growth can be slow to start, but after it begins it is very rapid. Armed with the information about what it takes to grow, preventing mold growth should be simple. But remember…Mildew spores are almost always present!!

**PREVENTING MILDEW:**

The two most effective methods of avoiding mildew problems are keeping things CLEAN and DRY. In particular, bathroom surfaces and fixtures should be cleaned to remove soap scum and body oils. Also, running an exhaust fan during and after showering and bathing helps reduce moisture levels.

**Keep things clean** — Mold will grow on surfaces that do not support mildew growth when they are clean. The slightest amount of soil on the surface of glass, ceramic tile, and glossy paint will supply the necessary “food” for mildew growth.

**Control temperature** — Keep windows closed and the air conditioner on when the temperature is higher than 65 degrees Fahrenheit.
Control moisture in the air — Moisture accumulates inside a home from normal household activities: breathing, bathing, cooking and cleaning.

Once mildew appears it should be removed as soon as possible and precautions should be taken to prevent its return by keeping humidity levels low.

REMOVING MILDEW:

After contamination, to prevent and remove mold: Clean it, dry it, and disinfect it. Unless these methods are used, mold may continue to plague homes.


Scam Alert

The Concierge Con

“This is the hotel front desk calling. There was a problem processing your credit card. Can you please verify your card number and billing address?” If you’re on vacation and this happens… Don’t! It’s a scam!

So how did the scammer get to you? He simply called the front desk asking for room 204 or a common name, such as “Mr. Smith;.” Once transferred, the call appears to you as if it’s made from within the hotel. Not wanting to get tossed out, you all-too willingly provide your digits and billing address over the phone — all the information a fraudster needs to begin making bogus charges.

So what should you do? Hotels generally won’t ask you to verify credit-card information over the phone. So if you get such a call, assume it’s a con. Say you’d prefer to handle the matter at the front desk: You’ll need a minute to gather your wallet or change out of beach gear. When you do make your way down, you will quickly find out if there’s really a problem with your card.

Source: Money, March 2007

ARE YOU LOSING MONEY THROUGH “FEES?”

You might be assessed fees by credit card company’s, phone bills, hotels, and more. Each year they get bigger and sneakier. Know what fees you might face and plan accordingly!

Over-Limit Fee - The charge for overdrawing your checking account or exceeding the limit on your credit card. These fees are at an all-time high. Plus, they may let you overspend—and then sting you. Transactions that exceed your limit are approved as a “convenience.” But, they should just raise your credit limit and charge interest. What can you do?— Request that ATM withdrawals, debit purchases or checks be approved only if you have enough money. Be mindful of how much you spend!

Late Fees — The levy you face when your credit-card payment doesn’t arrive by the due date or even a particular hour of the day. In a decade it’s gone up 150%, while the grace period to pay the bill has shrunk from 31 days to as few as 20. What can you do? — Mail your
check seven to 10 days before the due date. Or schedule automatic payments. If you’re late one or twice, most issuers will waive the fee. Repeat offenders won’t be so lucky and may face a penalty interest rate on their balance too.

**Biweekly Payment Fee** — To set up biweekly mortgage payments, some companies charge a few hundred dollars up front and then $10 or so a month to the business. **You can do the same thing on your own for nothing.** Companies hold the extra payments, earn interest on the cash all year and then send in the additional money at year-end. **What you can do?** - add an extra 1/12 to your mortgage payment each month. That’s one extra payment a year—the same as with biweekly payments but without the fees.

**Airlines** — Major carriers are adding new fees and enforcing ones they used to let slide. Some fees are unavoidable, but savvy travelers can bypass the worst offenders. **Talking to a person** - Call to book a flight or redeem your miles, or stop by the airport counter, and you could pay an extra $5 to $20. **What can you do?** ...learn to love online booking, or stick with more people friendly airlines.

**Gift-Card activation Fee** — You might pick a gift card from a bank over a store card because it's good anywhere. Trouble is, you'll pay $4 to $10 to “activate” the card. Then, after as few as six months, the card’s value could go down $2 to $3 a month because of dormancy or maintenance fees. **What can you do?** - Most gift cards are fee-free and don’t expire but be sure to check.

**Hotels** — Most travelers know that the mini-bar is nothing but a fee trap. But a $6 Snickers bar is a sweet deal compared with a $30 resort fee. **The hotel industry raked in $1.6 billion in fees in 2006, according to PricewaterhouseCoopers.** Predicting what you’ll pay can be hard because there is not an across-the-board fee policy. **Your best defense? Ask about extra charges before you book.** You’ll have the most leverage before you promise a hotel your business.

**Internet Connection Fee** — $9.95 a day. Mid-price hotels tend to offer free Net access to lure business travelers. High-end hotels are more likely to levy this one.

**Resort Fee** — $10 to $30. You might be charged this even if you never dip a toe in the pool or break a sweat on the treadmill.

**Mini-Bar Restocking** — $10 on top of what you pay for the junk food and liquor.

Source: Money, January 2007

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**Visit your local University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service office and pick up your Simply Florida Cookbook on the spot - and save the shipping! This beautiful book is a collection of 214 recipes from Extension Agents in Florida. It also includes complete nutritional analysis of each recipe. Of course, you can always order on-line!!**

[Http://simplyflorida.org](Http://simplyflorida.org)
Tim’s Tree List Is Likely To Cause Me Trouble

I know this article will get me in trouble with somebody but not every tree is well suited for Florida. There, I said it. Or I could have said that there are some lousy choices for trees in Florida but I won’t go that far.

Or I could have said it the way Tim McDonnell said it. Tim is a horticulture agent with Kansas State University in Sedgwick County, Kansas. In an article titled Tim’s Bottom Ten Trees he writes, “Some of the trees may have some good characteristics but the overall performance to me is sub par.”

What’s interesting to me is that some of the trees on Tim’s list for Kansas are also on the bottom of my tree list for Florida.

Silver Maple is a commonly planted tree in our area. It does have some good qualities but it appears on Tim’s list. This is what he has to say about this tree. “Silver Maple (Acer saccharinum) is a tree I can honestly say I never had and never will grow”. Kind of harsh, huh? The only good thing about this tree is its fast growth and drought tolerance. Sounds like a great tree for the last two summers. It is, if you need fast shade. I say this tree grows three feet a year and loses two feet to breakage. You might as well plant a tree that grows a foot. The bad characteristics are, it is brittle, develops poor branch angles, multiple central leaders, obnoxious fruit and possesses a root system that nothing will grow on.”

I could not have said it better. It’s true that silver maples are fast growing. The problem is you’re lucky if the tree makes it to ten years old, still in good shape in Florida. Now, I may be in trouble with some of the nurseries that sell silver maples.

Most fast growing trees are short lived. It’s almost a built in factor. The wood is usually soft and easily broken. This is not good news in Florida. After the tree reaches a reasonable size, the heavier limbs begin to break during Florida’s frequent storms. The average thunderstorm can produce winds strong enough to easily break limbs. And, Florida’s array of pests finds easy access into the soft wood of these fast growing trees, causing rot, decay and early death.

Willow (Salix sp) is also on Tim’s list. When people ask me about planting willow trees, I ask them how many old, large willow trees have you seen in Okaloosa County? There is a reason why you see few large, old willow trees. They generally don’t survive to a ripe old age here.

Purple-leaf plum (also on Tim’s list) is planted for its red, maroon foliage but it too is short lived. (I’m probably in trouble with many homeowners now). You’ll frequently see this tree on its last leg at a fairly young age displaying its dying branches throughout North Florida landscapes.
Finally, Bradford pear (Pyrus calleryana ‘Bradford’) is on the list. Now, I’m in big trouble with everybody including my wife, Christy. She wants me to plant a Bradford pear in our landscape. This tree is fast growing, drought tolerant, blooms well and has good fall color. But its downfall is its tight, upright, weak branch structure, which results in branches splitting and breaking away from the trunk with age on their own accord because of their weight.

It’s not that I’m saying to stop planting these trees. I just think people should know these trees are usually short lived. Yes, I know someone can show me the “granddaddy” silver maple that’s fifty years old in someone’s yard in Fort Walton Beach but such trees are the exception. Some people live to 120 but they certainly don’t represent the average life expectancy. Comparing the extreme to the average can be very misleading and unfair.

To help get myself out of trouble, I might write about some good trees in my next article and plant a Bradford pear for Christy.

Larry Williams
Extension Agent, Horticulture
June 26, 2007

Chicken Pasta Bowl

2 cups medium shell pasta, dry
1 cup sliced mushrooms
1/2 cup sliced red pepper strips
1 cup cooked, skinless chicken, cut in chunks
Grated parmesan - about 2-4 Tbsp.

1 Tbsp. olive oil
1 cup asparagus, cut in 2 inch strips
1 can low-fat, low-sodium chicken broth
Seasonings to taste: garlic powder, thyme, rosemary, black pepper

Directions:

Cook pasta according to package directions; drain in colander.
Add oil to large sauté pan and heat over medium-high heat.
Sauté vegetables until crisp-tender, stirring frequently.
Add cooked pasta, cooked chicken, broth and seasonings.
Heat until broth is evaporated and pasta is heated through.
Sprinkle with grated parmesan and serve hot.

Serves 4.

Each 1.5 cup serving: Calories 327, Fat 7 g; Saturated Fat 1.5 g, Trans Fat 0 g, Cholesterol 41 mg, Sodium 166 mg, Carbohydrate 41 g, Fiber 2.5 g, Protein 22 g.
Ranch-Style Vegetables

1 cup cauliflower, bite-size pieces   1 cup broccoli, bite-sized pieces
3/4 cup sliced carrots     1/2 cups sliced celery
1/3 cup chopped onion    1/4 tsp. dried dill weed
1 1/2 Tbsp. lemon juice
2 Tbsp. nonfat or reduced-fat, low sodium ranch-style dressing

Fill a 1 1/2 quart casserole, or microwave safe dish, with vegetables. Add dill and lemon juice. Follow directions below for microwave or conventional oven.

Microwave Oven: Cover and microwave 5 to 8 minutes or until vegetables are done to your liking. Be sure to stir vegetables every 2 minutes. Drain. Mix in dressing.

Conventional Oven: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cover and bake 20-30 minutes until vegetables are done to your liking. Drain. Mix in dressing.

Yield: 2 cups (4 servings). One serving: 1/2 cup. Per serving: 49 calories, 10 grams carbohydrate, 2 grams protein, 0 grams fat. Exchanges: 2 vegetables.

Lasagna Primavera

9 lasagna noodles (8 oz.)   2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
2 yellow squash, cut into 1/2 inch chunks 1 medium zucchini, cut into 1/2 inch chunks
1 large red bell pepper, chopped 1/2 lb. fresh mushrooms, sliced
3 garlic cloves, minced 1 container (15 oz.) part-skim ricotta cheese
2 cups (8 oz.) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese, divided 1/2 cup grated parmesan cheese
1/2 tsp. black pepper 1 egg
1 jar (28 oz.) light spaghetti sauce

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Cook lasagna noodles according to package directions, omitting the salt; drain and set aside. Coat a 9” X 13” baking dish with nonstick cooking spray.

In a large skillet, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Add the yellow squash, zucchini, bell pepper, mushrooms and garlic, and sauté for 4 to 5 minutes, or until tender. Remove from the heat and set aside. In a large bowl, combine the ricotta cheese, 1 1/2 cups mozzarella cheese, the Parmesan cheese, egg, and black pepper; mix well.

Spread one-third of the spaghetti sauce evenly over the bottom of the baking dish. Place 3 noodles over the sauce, then spread one-third of the cheese mixture over the noodles. Spoon one-third of the vegetable mixture over that. Repeat the layers two more times; top with the remaining 1/2 cup mozzarella cheese.

Cover with aluminum foil and bake for 45 minutes. Remove the aluminum foil and bake for 10 to 12 minutes, or until heated through and the cheese is golden. Allow to sit for 5 to 10 minutes before serving.

Exchanges: 1 1/2 starch, 2 Medium-Fat meat, 3 Vegetable, 1 Fat

Calories 377; Calories from Fat 142, Total Fat 16 g; Saturated Fat 7 g; Cholesterol 66 mg; Sodium 828 mg; Carbohydrate 37; Dietary Fiber 5 g, Sugars 11 g; Protein 23 g
HCE HOTLINE NEWS

HCE News:
Country Store in June raised over $1000!! Thanks to all the members and friends of Extension who worked and donated items.

District HCE Planning Meeting will be held August 8th at the Holmes County Agricultural Center in Bonifay. Registration will be 9:30 a.m., with the meeting commencing at 10:00 a.m. We will conclude with lunch. If you plan on attending, please call Lorraine Blaylock, Council President, or the Extension Office at 689-5850.

The Fall Okaloosa HCE Council meeting will be Friday, September 14th at 10:00 a.m. in Ft. Walton Beach. Join us for a “mini-health fair” at 9:30. There will be blood pressure and blood glucose checks, body fat analyses, weigh ins, and other fun stuff!! Covered dish luncheon to follow the meeting.