

Cooperative Extension

Promoting Healthy Families, Schools and Communities

Gather 'Round for a Family Meal

Michelle F. Brill, MPH, FCHS Educator, Mercer County



Family and Community Health Sciences educators have been researching why family meals are important. But if you ask children and adults, you'll get some pretty convincing answers! Eating together benefits family members of all ages. Children who eat meals with their families increase their vocabulary; do better in school; learn manners, conversational and social skills; are less likely to be overweight or develop eating disorders; and are more likely to make healthier food choices. Adolescents are less likely to engage in risky behaviors such as tobacco, alcohol and substance use; and are more likely to experience improved mental health such as better handling of cyberbullying and reduced incidence of depression. Inviting senior adults to dinner, especially on a regular basis, can help them make more nutritious food choices, boost their cognitive health and rekindle the joy of eating while conversing around the dinner table (The Family Dinner Project, 2017).

In this busy world, families are often splitting their time among different activities such as work, sports and school events. Each family member may be engrossed in their own smartphone or other device, not realizing how much time has passed before they "snap out" of cyberspace. Gathering everyone together for breakfast, lunch or dinner, offers time for family communication and a sense of belonging. Family meals need not take place at the kitchen table. They can be held at a park, restaurant, or a grandparent's home. Family meals also provide an opportunity to connect with one's cultural and ethnic heritage.

If planning regular family meals seems daunting, start with committing to just one meal a week and building from there. The job can be made easier if each family member contributes to the process. If each person gets a chance to add their favorite meal to the weekly rotation, it gives them something to look forward to. Children of all ages can help plan, shop, prep, serve and clean up. They'll be learning life skills along the way.

The American Academy of Pediatrics offers tips for making family meals easier to accomplish:

- **Freezer cooking:** On nights when you are making an all-out dinner, double it and freeze the other half. If Thursday nights are always crazy, but Tuesdays are easier, plan to shop for and cook a double meal on Tuesday that you can eat again on Thursday.
- **Love your crock pot:** Get all your cooking done earlier in the day, plug it in, and have it all ready to go at dinner time.
- **Use recyclable paper plates:** One of the appeals of fast food is easy clean-up and no dishes. It's better to eat healthy food on paper plates than buy fast food.

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How to Eat Healthy on a Budget

Offer Cohen, *Dietetic Intern, Montclair State University*

Karen Ensle EdD, RDN, FAND, CFCS, *Preceptor & FCHS Educator, Union County*



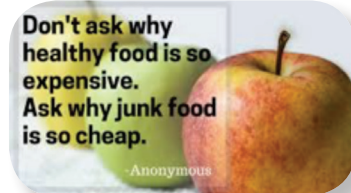
Eating healthy can be an expensive proposition especially for families struggling to keep up with the cost of living. This often results in families turning to the foods that they can afford, which may be fast food and snacks that are high in calories, added sugar, sodium and saturated fat but low in nutrients. The good news is that families can make healthier decisions with a little education and a lot of planning.

One of the greatest values can be found with frozen fruits and vegetables, which can normally be purchased for a reasonable price especially when they are on sale. Frozen produce is packed at the height of its nutrient content and can be stored for longer periods, which may help reduce food waste. Another great value can be found in purchasing fruit in a bag rather than individual pieces of fruit.



There are also key strategies to adopt when shopping starting with monitoring sales. When there is excess in stock, the store will look to move the product and the consumer can benefit from reduced costs on various items. Customers that consistently monitor the store for sales, even when items are not on their shopping list, may benefit from additional savings. However, it is important to closely monitor perishable items such as dairy, meat, poultry, and fish to avoid foodborne illness. Another key strategy is taking advantage of bulk pricing for items such as water, peanut butter, coffee, bread and many other items.

There are also certain stores that are more conducive to savings. Wholesale stores, grocery stores, and produce based grocery stores often marketed as farmers' market stores are where consumers are likely to find the greatest sales and savings. It is also essential to ensure the use of the specific store discount card or app at the checkout. Most sales that are marketed within the store, apply to store card holders. Pharmacies, convenience stores, and high-end specialty stores are likely to be more expensive.



Let us apply some of this knowledge by comparing the cost of feeding a family of four with a fast food meal compared to the strategies for eating healthy on a budget already

discussed. The prices for an adult combo meal at a fast food restaurant typically ranges from five to eight dollars and the kid's meal from three to four dollars. Feeding two parents and two children would cost about twenty dollars on average. If we were to purchase healthier foods and use the same budget for one meal, we could plan a healthy family meal including: a box of six turkey burgers for a price of \$6.99, \$2.50 for frozen mixed vegetables, \$2.99 for a loaf of whole wheat bread along with \$2.50 for a gallon of water, and \$3.50 for a gallon of 1% milk, totalling \$18.48. This would still leave room for four bananas for dessert or a snack at an average of twenty cents each for dessert. Eating healthy does not have to cost more than fast food!



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Eating healthy on a budget can be accomplished with proper planning and education. Once the consumer learns about strategies to save money, it is up to them to apply these tips in their weekly food shopping routines. Healthier meals are possible when consumers plan and manage their food purchases wisely along with taking advantage of sales and other cost saving measures.

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7 Common Sense Tips for Optimizing Your Immune System

Sandra Greci, MS, RD, LDN, CDE, FCHS Educator, Hunterdon County

Keeping yourself healthy and free from diseases is the role of your immune system. Immunity is the body's ability to use its natural defenses, through a body-wide, organized system of specialized cells, tissues, and organs. Proper Immune function is influenced by many factors, some of them modifiable (such as diet and physical activity) and others that are not (such as increasing age, or the presence of underlying medical conditions).

To promote optimal immunity, consider the following lifestyle strategies:

- 1 Don't smoke.** Smoking harms the immune system and can make the body less successful at fighting disease. Additionally, smoking increases the risk for several immune and autoimmune disorders (conditions caused when the immune system mistakenly attacks the body's healthy cells and tissues).
- 2 Follow a healthful, balanced eating plan every day.** Among the nutrients well recognized for playing an important role in building immunity are protein and zinc (found in foods such as lean meats, poultry, eggs, fish, seafood, soy and beans), Vitamins C and A (many fruits and vegetables, particularly citrus and orange-colored fruits/vegetables), and Vitamin E (nuts, seeds, and vegetable oils). Others, including Vitamin B6, Vitamin D, folate, selenium, iron, and copper may also play a role. Make sure to include a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, reduced-fat dairy, and lean protein foods in your daily meal plan. Limit added sugars, unhealthy fats, and excess calories. Aim for a healthy weight. If you are unable to obtain adequate nutrition from your diet alone, talk to your doctor about the need to take a daily multivitamin/mineral supplement.
- 3 Exercise regularly.** Regular physical activity promotes overall good health, including heart health, lower blood pressure, healthy body weight, and protection against several chronic diseases like diabetes and cancer. Strive for at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity each week, including both cardiovascular and strength-building types.
- 4 If you drink alcohol, drink only in moderation.** Excess alcohol consumption can weaken the immune system, and make the body more susceptible to respiratory infections such as pneumonia. Too much alcohol can result in liver disease and disruption of the normal bacteria in the gut. Moderation is defined as one drink per day for women and no more than two drinks per day for men.
- 5 Get adequate sleep.** Studies show that people who do not get enough quality sleep are more likely to get sick after being exposed to a virus, and take longer to recover. This may be related to the reduction in protective proteins (cytokines) normally released by the immune system during sleep. Long-term sleep deficiency can also increase your risk of chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. Set up a healthy nightly sleep routine (control caffeine before bedtime, shut off cell phones and other screens), and aim for 7-8 hours of sleep nightly for adults (9-10 hours/night for children).
- 6 Reduce and manage chronic stress in your life.** Stress that is persistent and poorly managed (leading to excessive worrying, depression, or anxiety) can result in abnormally high levels of the hormone cortisol. Cortisol normally regulates both the inflammatory and immune response in the body, but under chronic stress levels, tissue sensitivity to cortisol decreases, and immune response declines. Practice stress-reducing techniques such as meditation, yoga, or music relaxation, and seek professional help if symptoms persist.
- 7 Take steps to avoid/limit infection** by seasonal bacteria and viruses, though proper hand washing, cough/sneeze etiquette, effective cleaning/disinfection of objects and surfaces, and avoiding close contact with sick people, if possible.



For more information, please visit:

- CDC Preventing CoVid19 Spread Communities: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019ncov/community/index.html>
- Harvard Health Publishing/Harvard Medical School: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/how-to-boost-your-immune-system>
- USDA ChooseMyPlate <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/>
- Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans 2nd Edition: https://health.gov/sites/default/files/201909/Physical_Activity_Guidelines_2nd_edition.pdf
- CDC Tobacco Use: https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/50thanniversary/pdfs/fs_smoking_overall_health_508.pdf

FCHS in Camden County Teaches Consumers to Eat Smart & Be Active with Support of SNAP-Ed Grant

Kaitlyn Fox, Intern: Rowan College at Gloucester County

Luanne J. Hughes, MS, RDN, FCHS Educator and Professor, RCE of Gloucester County



SNAP-Ed is a grant program funded through a federal and state partnership with the USDA and New Jersey Department of Health. It teaches SNAP-eligible consumers about proper nutrition, budgeting skills, and incorporating physical activity into a daily routine.

This is the third article in a series that profiles the work that the Department of Family and Community Health Sciences (FCHS) is doing to offer nutrition and physical education as part of New Jersey's SNAP-Ed program. FCHS manages SNAP-Ed in Region 2 (Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Mercer Counties).

SNAP-Ed supplies a diversified selection of interventions to help consumers gain knowledge and encourage them to adopt healthier lifestyle behaviors. Eleven different interventions are available to accommodate the variety of audiences FCHS reaches with SNAP-Ed outreach.

Camden County SNAP-Ed program coordinators chose *Eating Smart Being Active (ESBA)* as their intervention of focus. *ESBA* is a healthy eating and active living curriculum for adult learners. With the help of engaging activities and incorporation of the different MyPlate sections into each lesson, nutrition education is enjoyable for participants. When an individual hears 'physical activity,' usually endurance running, or heavy weights come to mind. *ESBA's* goal is to broaden a participant's mindset about physical activity. Light cardiovascular exercise is a quick and easy method *ESBA* uses to assist participants in obtaining a daily workout.



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Lexi Mestas, a SNAP-Ed program coordinator from Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Camden County uses *ESBA* in a variety of community settings. Community centers, job training sites, behavioral healthcare centers, and methadone clinics are all locations that *ESBA* lessons take place. Her role as an *ESBA* coordinator is to connect with organizations to deliver the series of lessons which include nutrition education, and an exercise from the "Cardio Pyramid" which uses a variety of exercises that decrease in time and increase in intensity, such as jogging in place for thirty seconds, and hands-on preparation of a healthy recipe. We further asked questions regarding *ESBA*.

Q: What are the advantages of *ESBA*? As a participant? An educator?

A: For participants, *ESBA* is able to teach consumers an easy, versatile exercise routine, how to prepare healthy meals on a budget, and components of proper nutrition for living a healthier lifestyle. The lessons are fun and engaging!

For me as an educator, I appreciate the flexibility of *ESBA*. We can target consumers' specific needs, yet it is a strong curriculum. We deliver a multitude of lesson "packages" that allow us to cater to an organization's particular needs. For example, a group of participants who are expectant or new mothers will benefit from our three maternal and infant supplementary lessons.

Q: Why is it never too late to learn about nutrition/physical education?

A: We have seen great success with many of our participants in drug rehabilitation who make a life-changing decision to put their health first. They have attended every lesson with eagerness and willingness to learn and finished the series with the attitude and tools to continue their health journey. That journey looks differently for many people but Eating Smart, Being Active is a great curriculum to aid in this process.

Q: What's the participants' favorite part of the program?

A: Our participants most enjoy the "Cardio Pyramid" and food preparation. They are excited to learn the routine and improve each week, as well as learn new healthy recipes to share with their loved ones.

FCHS in Camden County Teaches Consumers to Eat Smart & Be Active with Support of SNAP-Ed Grant - continued from page 4

ESBA has nine core lessons and three maternal and infant supplementary nutrition lessons, each containing a specific concentration:

Core Lessons:

1. Welcome to *ESBA*, Meet the Educator
2. Physical Activity is Part of a Healthy Lifestyle
3. How to Stretch Food Dollars
4. Increasing Variety of Fruits and Vegetables
5. Why Whole Grains are Beneficial & Identifying Whole Grains
6. Calcium Rich Foods & Weight Bearing Activity to Build Strong Bones
7. Choosing Lean Sources of Protein & Food Safety
8. Choosing Foods Low in Fat, Sodium, and Sugar
9. Review of Key Concepts & How to Influence Family in Good Decision Making

Supplementary Lessons:

1. Eating Smart & Being Active During Pregnancy
2. Feeding Your New Baby
3. When & How to Introduce Feeding Your Baby Solid Foods

ESBA is making an impact in the community with the help of Lexi, and other faculty and staff at FCHS. Lexi mentioned that providing plenty of easily understandable information to both participants and educators, user-friendly handouts & worksheets, and diversity in activities throughout each lesson makes this curriculum one of the most successful. Making a change in your lifestyle can happen at any age, and this intervention proves it.

Resources:

Baker, Susan, and Katie McGirr. "Eating Smart Being Active." *Eating Smart • Being Active*, 2017, eatingsmartbeingactive.colostate.edu/.

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Thank you!

All About Fiber

Andrea French, *Dietetic Intern, Montclair State University*
 Shailja Mathur, MS, MEd, RDN, *Program Coordinator, Middlesex County*

Fiber is a type of carbohydrate found in a variety of whole foods and supplements. Normally, carbohydrates are broken down in glucose molecules the body can use for energy. Fiber, however, cannot be fully digested by digestive enzymes and passes through most of the digestive tract intact. Consuming high fiber foods will fill the stomach quickly and provide feelings of satiation faster than a low fiber meal. Because it cannot be broken down fully, when fiber is consumed it draws water into the digestive tract and can help to move foods along and promote healthy digestion.

A high fiber diet has been linked to a range of health benefits. In addition to healthy digestion, according to research done by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, populations that consume more dietary fiber have less chronic disease. High fiber diets may be associated with lower blood pressure, lower serum lipids, long term benefits on glycemic control, insulin sensitivity, and inflammation. Additionally, because fiber adds bulk to your diet, it is often linked with a lower body weight. Foods high in fiber typically have a high nutrient density, but a low energy density, meaning they have fewer calories. This is one of the main reasons why high fiber diets are beneficial to overall health.

Soluble vs Insoluble Fiber

There are two different types of fiber, soluble and insoluble. Soluble fiber dissolves in water and breaks down into a gel like substance in the colon. Insoluble fiber is the fiber that does not dissolve in water, and instead stays intact. Both have similar benefits on digestion and overall health, so it is important to consume a wide variety of foods that contain both.

How much fiber should I have a day?

In the typical American diet, the average person gets about 15g of fiber per day. The Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs) recommend 14 grams dietary fiber per

1,000 kcal, or 25 g for adult women and 38 g for adult men, based on epidemiologic studies showing protection against cardiovascular disease.

It is important to note, that increasing your fiber intake requires an increase in fluid intake. As a general rule of thumb, take your body weight in pounds, and then half that number and that is the minimum number of ounces of water recommended in a day. Increasing physical activity and fiber intake both increase the amount of water needed per day.

What are good sources of fiber?

Fruits, vegetables, and whole grains are the whole food groups that contain the highest amounts of fiber. Aside from just fiber, a diet high in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains provides a wide array of key vitamins and nutrients that promote overall health.













Tips for increasing your fiber intake:

- **Snack** on raw fruits and vegetables instead of refined grains
- **Swap white pasta and rice** for whole wheat pasta, and whole grain.
- **Utilize nuts and seeds** as toppings on meals and snacks.
 - *Ex: chia seeds on toast, berries and nuts in yogurt.*
- **Always include a vegetable** in meals

Bonus: Resistant Starch

Starch is a form of carbohydrate, that traditionally breaks down the same way, into glucose. Resistant starch does not do that, but instead does something similar to soluble fiber. Instead of immediately breaking down into glucose to be used for energy, resistant starches have a different shape and therefore cannot be digested until they reach the large intestine. For this reason, they have a more delayed result on blood glucose. For people living with diabetes, this is valuable to avoid quick spikes in blood sugar.

Some examples of resistant starches are plantains and green bananas, overnight oats and cooked and cooled white rice. For more information, visit <http://hopkinsdiabetesinfo.org/what-is-resistant-starch/> for an article about resistant starch written by a Registered Dietitian and Certified Diabetes Educator.

Foods High in Fiber	
	Split Peas Fiber: 9g Per 1 Cup, Cooked
	Lentils Fiber: 15.6g Per 1 Cup, Cooked
	Broccoli Fiber: 5.1g Per 1 Cup
	Avocado Fiber: 7.6g Per Half, Raw
	Blackberries Fiber: 7.6g Per 1 Cup, Raw
	Raspberries Fiber: 8g Per 1 Cup, Raw
	Pears Fiber: 5.5g Per 1 Medium
	Brussel Sprouts Fiber: 4g Per 1 Cup, Cooked
	Oats Fiber: 4g Per 1 Cup, Cooked
	Chia Seeds Fiber: 10g Per 2 Tablespoons, Dry
	Whole Wheat Pasta Fiber: 6g Per 1 Cup, Cooked
	Black Beans Fiber: 15g Per 1 Cup, Cooked

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Cauliflower Power

Chris Zellers, FCHS Educator, Cape May County



It's white, it's an underdeveloped flower bud, its broccoli's closest relative, it's rice, it's pizza, that's right, it's cauliflower. If you go out to eat or you walk through the grocery store's produce or frozen sections, you're likely to see a cauliflower product like cauliflower pizza, mashed cauliflower or cauliflower rice. So, what's all the buzz about cauliflower? These products are substituting for higher carbohydrate dishes and starchy vegetables while packing extra nutrients and allergy substitutes in a great plant-based option.

Cauliflower has much to offer being both filling and high in fiber. At just 25 calories per cup cauliflower offers folate, vitamin A, Vitamin C, potassium and B6 making it a good replacement for foods that may be higher in calories and lower in vitamins and minerals. According to the National Cancer Institute cauliflower has been linked to cancer prevention due to its phytochemicals. Cauliflower packs a lot of nutrients in its white (sometimes yellow, green or purple) head.

Besides fighting disease, cauliflower makes a good case for other contributions to our overall health. It's high in fiber and water so it promotes bowel as well as bone health. Does your skin look better? You may want to thank cauliflower as it is another benefit the vegetable offers. Cauliflower, a cruciferous vegetable, contains Choline which can improve sleep, foster better muscle movement, and support learning and memory. It seems to have endless benefits.

Cauliflower is also a tasty alternative for people who have Celiac Disease or Gluten Sensitivity. Gluten Sensitivity or Celiac Disease means a person cannot indulge in pizza (or other foods) made from wheat flour, so cauliflower makes a welcomed alternative. It also provides an extra serving of veggies in their diet while reducing calories and increasing vitamin and mineral intake – imagine, pizza that may help fight chronic disease!

Roasted Garlic Cauliflower Mash

- 2 medium cauliflower, cut into florets
- 6 oz. fat free or low-fat cream cheese, softened
- 1/3 c. fat free milk
- 4-6 cloves of garlic, roasted
- 1/2 teaspoon Olive Oil
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Freshly chopped chives, for garnish
- Butter, for serving

Method:

- 1) Trim the top of the garlic off and place in a covered dish. Roast at 400 degrees for 30-40 minutes. Remove from the oven and set aside to let cool.
- 2) Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add cauliflower florets and cook until tender, 10 minutes. Drain well, pressing with paper towels or a clean dish towel to remove as much excess water as possible.
- 3) Return to pot and mash cauliflower with a potato masher until smooth and no large pieces remain.
- 4) Remove roasted garlic from skins when cool by squeezing the garlic cloves. Add garlic pulp to cauliflower.
- 5) Stir in cream cheese and milk and season with salt and pepper. Mash until completely combined and creamy. (Add a couple tablespoons more milk until you reach desired consistency.)
- 6) Garnish with chives, season with more pepper, and top with a pat of butter.

Recipe authored and tested by Chris Zellers



Nutrition Facts	
Servings: 8	
Amount per serving	
Calories	96
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 7.8g	10%
Saturated Fat 4.7g	24%
Cholesterol 24mg	8%
Sodium 103mg	4%
Total Carbohydrate 4.5g	2%
Dietary Fiber 1.3g	5%
Total Sugars 1.8g	
Protein 3.1g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 45mg	3%
Iron 1mg	3%
Potassium 202mg	4%
*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a food serving contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calorie a day is used for general nutrition advice.	
The site used to develop this label was: https://www.verywellfit.com/recipe-nutrition-analyzer-4157076	

Cauliflower is a good source of fiber that helps with digestion and maintaining a healthy weight. In just one cup of this white veggie there is 3 grams of fiber. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recommends fiber intake of 21-25 grams for women and 30-38 grams for men depending on age. On average Americans are only getting about 10-15 grams per day putting us well below our required need for daily fiber. Adding mashed cauliflower instead of mashed potatoes to your dinner routine can help to increase your overall fiber intake.

As is the case with any food that becomes popular as a new 'superfood', cauliflower can be detrimental in large quantities for some people on certain medications. It contains significant amounts of Vitamin K (as do other vegetables such as dark, leafy greens, broccoli, and Brussel sprouts) which can interact with blood thinners. Don't forget to read the labels on new products you try made with cauliflower, and make sure the ingredient list is not high in added salts, sugars, and fats. Give cauliflower a try to add more fiber, vitamins and minerals to your diet!



In order to reap the potential benefits of making healthier choices, aim to include a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables, legumes, whole grains,

lean animal protein or plant-based protein, and low-fat or fat-free dairy. Sugar-sweetened beverages should be replaced with water and limited to a "once in a while" treat.

Finally, enjoy this special time with your family. Limit interruptions during the meal by turning off the TV and silencing phones. Keep the atmosphere positive and pleasant, encouraging opportunities for all members to share stories of the day. Avoid discussing negative issues that may promote tension, including discipline or conflicts about food. Maintaining a relaxed approach to family mealtime will go a long way in making it a family tradition that everyone will look forward to. Visit <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/myplatekitchen> for 30 minutes or less recipes, seasonal and budget recipes, videos and Rutgers NJAES Fact Sheet 1104. Available at <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1104/> 2019.

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We asked visitors of all ages who attended FCHS events to tell us what they like about eating together with their families. Here are some responses:

"I like to cook", Toño, age 5

"If you have a hard math problem your family can give you tips", Owen, age 9

"Spend time with my family", Jonathan, age 10

"When we all talk about each other's day", Gavin, age 11

"You talk and pay attention to what you're eating", Gregory, age 12

"Having the whole family together and eating and laughing with each other", Andrew, age 15

"I like seeing them all at once and taking a break from technology", Ali, age 16

"It's the time I get the most information out of my kids!" Meredith, age 43

"To know about each one in the family on a daily basis", Qamar, age 70

"I love hearing about college experiences from my grandchildren", Lindy (called Oma), age 88

"Good food, great memories", Chuck, age unknown

