

Cooperative Extension
Promoting Healthy Families, Schools and Communities

FCHS SPOTLIGHT

What Types of Programming do You Offer?

NJ SNAP-Ed nutrition and physical activity education geared towards SNAP-eligible audiences. Healthy cooking demonstrations, grocery store tours, cooking lessons for people of all ages.

What Project Do You Currently Spend Most of Your Time On?

Adapting nutrition education to virtual delivery during COVID – connecting with audiences across Camden County via social media and virtual meeting platforms and sharing information about how to cook healthy, balanced meals on a budget using a variety of shelf-stable pantry staples.

Name One FCHS Resource You Think More Consumers Should Know About?

FCHS Departments across New Jersey have done a fantastic job promoting local resources through their social media pages. I think following your local FCHS office on Facebook can be a great way to find out about partners and opportunities related to health and wellness in your community. Our Camden County FCHS Page can be found at: <https://www.facebook.com/CamdenFCHS>

And the statewide page that promotes content from every county's page can be found at: <https://www.facebook.com/FCHSRutgers>

What Makes FCHS Programs/Resources Unique?

Having FCHS educators that are embedded in the Camden County community allows us to connect wellness topics to specific community groups. All RCE/FCHS resources available to residents and the public.



What Nutrition/Health/Wellness Mantra Do You Live By?

Small changes over time builds healthy habits!



Name, Title, Credentials:

Theo Banks,
Program Coordinator I, NJ SNAP-Ed
Nutrition Educator

City & County of Office Location:
Camden, Camden County

Number of Years with Extension:

2.5 - I started at the inception of the new NJ SNAP-Ed program, but had been working in Camden as an AmeriCorps FoodCorps service member for a year prior to that.



In This ISSUE

FCHS Spotlight	1
Americans Love Grilling and Eating Outdoors	2
The Unexpected Health Benefits of Gardening	3
Insects: The Future of Food and Feed	4
Budgeting: A Key Step to Financial Success	5
Sleep Secrets	6
Staying Active in the Spring and Summer	7

Americans Love

Grilling and Eating Outdoors

Karen Ensle EdD, RDN, FCHS Educator, Union County



The pandemic has caused Americans to rediscover their love of barbecuing and with it includes more meals and snacks outdoors. This has been a helpful way to get Americans outside their homes during the pandemic as well as eating many delicious dishes.



Studies have shown that outdoor eating and smells of barbecue bring back happy family memories. Grilling outside has been the top cooking method used during COVID but also a favorite of many Americans during the year. The most likely foods to be grilled are beef, chicken, fish, veggies, and fruit.

Grilling is a “social event” for many families with their friends, relatives, and neighbors. We grill for celebrations like Memorial Day, July 4th, birthdays, holidays, wedding receptions and graduations. It is an activity that brings groups together to socialize, catch up on what is happening and to be able to have a relaxing time eating and enjoying each other’s company. Grilling can also be a healthy method to cook meats, poultry, and other foods as the fat cooks off the food. Marinating foods in salad dressings and home-made basting sauces adds rich flavor. Quick burgers are served frequently and well-liked by kids and adults alike. The open fire gives food a rich and delightful flavor.



Barbequing Adds Flavor to Outdoor Dining and Healthy Activities

Outdoor eating during the pandemic became a lifesaver for many families. That does not mean taking the dining area out of the home is a seamless transition, but families tried it and worked on mastering eating outdoors along with grilling their food.

A survey, conducted by OnePoll on behalf of the American Lamb Board, found the most common outdoor culinary mishaps included forgotten ingredients, over or undercooked food, and dropping meals. Many families learned to really cook for the first time rather than eating away from home at restaurants. How did families navigate the grilling?

Many families found cooking shows on the internet and TV were helpful. They learned cooking skills by experimentation, following videos and Facebook live and lived a different lifestyle during the pandemic. Outdoor cooking has led to experiencing new activities like hiking, walking in neighborhoods, and sitting on front porches to speak to neighbors. A mix of old and new family routines have impacted all Americans. We have learned more about nature and the beauty of our parks, and our surroundings. For many, the lifestyle changes have been healthier if daily breaks in computer Zoom time was part of their daily routine. A balance between sitting and moving along with healthier methods of cooking such as grilling, has been critical throughout Covid 19 from March 2020 until today. Taking small steps to keep active and eat healthy allows everyone to stay well. See RCE Fact Sheet 1089 “Grilling with Care” <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1089/> for more information on safe grilling.

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The Unexpected Health Benefits of Gardening

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The Dirt on Gardening

About 1/3 of the United States' population participates in gardening. That is about 117 million people! Gardening is the second only to walking as the most popular leisure-time physical activity. Gardening is a pastime that offers several benefits for physical and mental health.

Gardening

Gardening takes place largely outdoors, meaning that gardeners are exposed to plenty of sunlight. Exposure to sunlight, especially during spring and summer, allows your body to produce the nutrient vitamin D. Vitamin D supports your immune system and helps with calcium absorption as well as bone health. As few as 10 to 15 minutes of exposure on your arms and legs can be enough to meet your daily requirements. Sunlight also increases the levels of serotonin in your brain; serotonin is a hormone that helps you relax.

Get Those Hands Dirty!

Getting your hands dirty in the soil may also help boost your immune system, thanks to the bacterium *Mycobacterium vaccae*. Studies show that this bacterium may have anti-inflammatory properties and that it may increase serotonin levels in the brain. Exposure to the skin and through inhalation can help to ensure that you absorb *Mycobacterium vaccae* and enjoy its benefits.

No Gym? No Problem!

With current COVID-related restrictions on indoor gyms, many people may not be getting their regular exercise in. If this is you, consider gardening! Gardening is considered a moderate-intensity physical activity. Depending on the specific activity involved in gardening (raking, pulling weeds, digging, to name a few), it can burn between 165 and 330 calories per hour! That is comparable to walking or bike riding. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends getting 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity each week to decrease your risk for obesity, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, as well as other related diseases. People with limited mobility can still benefit from gardening because activities can be personalized to meet their needs. Gardening can also increase fine-motor skills and dexterity. For older adults, physical activity can decrease your risk of falling – which also means a decreased risk of hip or other bone fracture.

Zen Garden

Studies suggest that being outside can lower blood pressure as well as decrease the presence of stress hormones in the body. Being outdoors has also been shown to help aid in recovery from mental exhaustion and inspire feelings of life-satisfaction. Gardening itself can feel rewarding and create a sense of purpose as you get to see what you have nurtured come into bloom. Some studies have also suggested may help people with ADHD to improve their ability to focus.



"You reap what you sow..."

...and with gardening that is literal! When you garden, you are the harvester. You know where it came from and when it was picked. This knowledge allows you to eat your harvest at its ripest! And when produce is at its ripest, you benefit from eating it at its most flavorful and most nutritious.

Insects: The Future of Food and Feed

Matthew Livingston, Princeton High School, and
Donald W Schaffner, PhD, Distinguished Professor & Extension Specialist in Food Science



Insects are an increasingly important alternative food source due to climate change and global population increases. Conventional livestock (cows, pigs, chicken etc.) all require large volumes of water for production and processing and contribute to greenhouse gases linked to global warming. Food insecurity is also a large issue around the world, as many people do not have access to large sources of protein if their community is not able to raise livestock.



There are currently about 2,000 insect species eaten in over 113 countries in Asia, Latin America, Africa, and Europe. The practice of eating insects (entomophagy) may seem new, but it has actually been practiced for thousands of years, since the earliest hunter gatherer societies. Insects can be a healthy, nutritious and environmentally-friendly alternative to conventional animal livestock to help combat climate change.



Insects are a good source of protein, carbohydrates, lipids, vitamins, and they contain eight of the amino acids that are essential for human growth. Insects can also be raised in confined spaces, saving land that would be required by conventional livestock. Furthermore, insects have an incredible feed conversion rate, which means that they produce a lot more food compared to other animal food sources, given the same feed inputs. Insects accomplish this high efficiency while producing less greenhouse gases and requiring very little water to grow, which means that they can contribute to food security in areas with fewer resources.



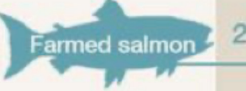
Estimates indicate that if insects replace conventional livestock, this may free up parts of the nearly 70% of fertile land that is currently used to raise animals and their feed. This would help in reforestation efforts across the world, so that some of the land previously used for agriculture can be used for other purposes. Insects such as the black soldier fly larvae can also have non-human food benefits as more nutritious and environmentally sustainable chicken and fish feed.

Sources:

- Deroy, Ophelia, et al. "The Insectivore's Dilemma, and How to Take the West out of It." *Food Quality and Preference*, vol. 44, Sept. 2015, pp. 44–55., doi:10.1016/j.foodqual.2015.02.007.
- Yen, Alan L. "Edible Insects: Traditional Knowledge or Western Phobia?" *Entomological Research*, vol. 39, no. 5, 17 Sept. 2009, pp. 289–298., doi:10.1111/j.1748-5967.2009.00239.x.
- Kim, Tae-Kyung, et al. "Edible Insects as a Protein Source: A Review of Public Perception, Processing Technology, and Research Trends." *Food Science of Animal Resources*, Korean Society for Food Science of Animal Resources, Aug. 2019, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6728817/.

Why should I eat crickets?

Healthy, sustainable, delicious! 80% of countries and 2.5 billion people already eat them.

200 calorie serving	Protein	Fat	Omega-3	Fiber
 Crickets	31g	8.1g	1.8g	7.2g
 90% Lean Beef	22.4g	11.2g	0.04g	0g
 Farmed salmon	20.4g	13.4g	2.5g	0g

Sources: USDA SR-25 and Nutritional composition and safety aspects of edible insects, Birgit A. Rumpold and Oliver K. Schlüter *Mol. Nutr. Food Res.* 2013, 57, 802–823.

Despite the benefits that insects might bring in the fight against climate change, there are psychological barriers in many cultures. Studies have found that many people associate insects with thoughts of death and disease, which are likely propagated through their role as pests. Many also believe entomophagy is "uncivilized" since it is practiced by native groups in countries with developing economies. It is true that insects (much like conventional livestock) can pose food safety concerns if not properly raised and handled to control risks of foodborne pathogens. There is also a concern that the chitin found in the exoskeleton and wings of many insects, might trigger an allergic reaction in those already allergic to shellfish or dust mites. Fortunately, modern concepts in food safety and insect-raising and handling practices ensure that these risks can be appropriately managed. Insects pose little to no danger to the average consumer, so societal feelings of disgust towards insects should subside, especially with education and experience.



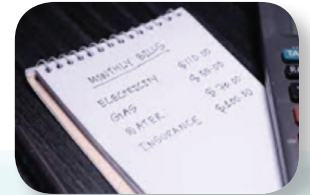
Budgeting: A Key Step to Financial Success

Barbara O'Neill, Ph.D., CFP®, Distinguished Professor and Extension Financial Management Specialist Emeritus, Rutgers Cooperative Extension



One of the best small steps that people can take to improve their finances is to prepare (and follow) a budget. Budgeting is a fundamental financial planning practice, and, without a budget, it is hard to manage other aspects of personal finance including credit, insurance, saving, investing, and achieving goals such as a new car or a comfortable retirement. Financial goals cannot be achieved if there is no money set aside for them.

Budgeting has also been found in research to be associated with performance of positive health and financial practices. People who budget their money may be inclined to “budget” their calories and self-restrict their food consumption and/or adjust their physical activity to stay within their daily calorie “allowance.”



Below are nine key things to know about budgeting:

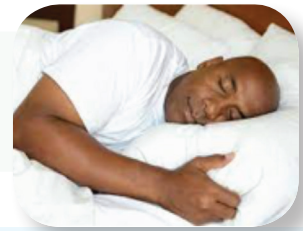
Regardless of what group you fall into, there are things you can do to stabilize your finances, build resiliency, and enhance financial security. Below are ten action steps to consider during the months ahead:

- ◆ **Positive Cash Flow is the Goal-** A budget is a plan for future income and expenses, including savings. The goal is positive cash flow, i.e., income greater than savings. Ideally, a budget should be hand-written or computer-generated with specific categories of income, spending, and dollar amounts.
- ◆ **Individual Factors are Important-** Examples include individual needs and wants, whether you have a stable income (the same amount in each paycheck) or a variable income that fluctuates every month, and whether you prefer to use a “paper and pencil” worksheet, an Excel spreadsheet, or a budgeting app.
- ◆ **Savings is a Fixed Expense-** How much you need to save per month or per paycheck to fund future goals should be set aside as a fixed expense that stays the same from month to month in a budget. A general online financial goal-setting calculator can determine the correct amount to save.
- ◆ **Budgeting Methods Vary-** Many people use the same budget format from year to year, adjusting for changes in income and expenses. For example, they use computer software or apps or a plain sheet of paper. What matters most is that you have a budget, not how you budget.
- ◆ **COVID-19 Impacted Budget Priorities-** Many people are working less (or not at all) and are struggling to make ends meet. Others are earning as much or more than before and are saving more due to decreased household expenses. In either case, budgets need to be adjusted according to cash flow changes.
- ◆ **Unexpected Expenses Always Occur-** It is not a question of “if,” but “when,” unexpected expenses happen. For this reason, financial experts recommend including a “fudge factor” (a.k.a., a “miscellaneous budget category”) in household budgets. If the money is not needed, it can be rolled over into savings.
- ◆ **Expenses Can be Trimmed-** Experts recommend starting with flexible expenses such as heating/cooling, subscriptions, streaming fees, and food. Also, look for less expensive shopping options (e.g., thrift shops), do more cooking at home, and consider ways to reduce fixed expenses such as refinancing a home mortgage, selecting a less expensive apartment or car, and shopping around for insurance policy discounts.
- ◆ **Benefits Can Supplement Income-** People who are struggling financially can receive public benefits (e.g., utility assistance or food from a food bank), if income qualified. This frees up income for other expenses. Other ways to increase income are to barter items in lieu of spending cash and to sell unneeded items.
- ◆ **Budgets Affect Credit Scores-** A budget can prevent negative credit report data by including funds to repay debt as a fixed expense. Also, if followed, a budget can help avoid overspending on credit, which reduces a credit cardholders’ credit utilization ratio, which is worth about 30% of a FICO credit score. Finally, a budget can include funds to build an emergency fund, so people are less likely to use credit in emergencies.

To create your own personal budget, take these two steps. First, track your income and expenses for a month or two to get accurate data about your current income and expenses. Next, use this Spending Plan Worksheet from Rutgers Cooperative Extension to create a plan to manage your money.

Sleep Secrets

Christine Zellers, MPP, FCHS Educator, Cape May County



Sleep is becoming more stressful and fleeting for Americans, as the pandemic increases worry and contributes to tossing and turning during the night. Many adults and youth suffer from sleep disorders and general sleep loss which takes a toll on overall health. Chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity, depression, and anxiety have been shown to have a correlation with sleep problems and disorders, however, the link between lack of sleep and these diseases is not proven. It may be caused by underlying behavioral or hereditary factors. Getting a good night's sleep at the very least makes a person feel better the next day but may be easier said than done.



Most adults need 7-9 hours of sleep per night. Babies sleep a lot more because they are growing and developing, sleeping 16-18 hours per day. School aged children need about 9.5 hours per night as they too are growing and developing. Older adults sleep less, sometimes due to certain medications but usually after age 60 sleep becomes shorter and more interrupted by waking and even a lighter sleep.

Small lifestyle changes are an easy way to get more sleep and improve health. Start by taking steps to go to bed at the same time and wake up at the same time every day. Make sure to exercise every day. The recommendation for cardiovascular-type exercise for adults is 150 minutes per week and 2 additional days that include strength training. Consider not exercising 2-3 hours before bedtime to avoid restlessness. Caffeine can prevent a person from sleeping too, so cutting back on coffee, sodas and energy drinks may make sleeping well easier. Avoid caffeine especially 2-3 hours before going to bed. Like caffeine, nicotine is a stimulant and can prevent good sleep patterns. When a smoker has a craving or urge to smoke it is the addiction to nicotine causing them to be anxious and this sometimes wakes smokers up in the night. Consider quitting smoking and try the State of NJ free smoking cessation program throughout the State website. Alcohol interferes with sleep stages as well and cutting back on this substance may produce better sleep. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend women consume only one drink per day and men two at most. Although alcohol is a depressant, it can become a stimulant and act to suppress sleep. It is best not to drink too much and too close to bedtime to get a good night's sleep.

During waking hours try to find a way to destress using meditation, yoga, exercise, or a hobby. Stress can cause short-term or long-term sleeplessness so try managing your stress. Unplug during the day and especially before bedtime to decrease extra brain activity. Avoid overeating all day but especially before going to bed when your digestion may interfere with sound sleep. Finally, if nothing else is working lying awake can be tortuous so get up and read a book or take a warm bath and do something to relax to encourage sleepiness. All lifestyle changes are difficult but getting a good night's sleep is a reward for overall better health. Consult with your healthcare professional for additional help as needed.

Staying Active in the Spring and Summer

Karen Ensle EdD, RDN, FAND, CFCS, FCHS Educator, Union County



Here comes Summer! The long-awaited warmer temperatures are on their way! The winter season is a challenging time to stay active, with colder temperatures, slippery conditions, and a lack of daylight hours. Staying physically active is one of the best ways to improve your mental and physical health and keep yourself on track to reach your fitness goals. Physical activity can help you sleep better and reduce anxiety. Regular physical activity also helps you to improve your balance, lower your risk of type 2 diabetes and many kinds of cancer. Keeping active helps to strengthen bones and muscles, lower blood pressure, maintain or lose weight, and keep your mind sharp as you get older. Emerging research also suggests physical activity may help boost your immune function.

According to CDC, experts recommend adults get at least 150 minutes a week of moderate intensity physical activity. Many activities count, such as walking, running, or wheelchair rolling. You can break that up into smaller chunks of time or spread your activity out during the week. Try 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week. It all counts. Get started today with these tips to stay active as the days get warmer:



✓ **Take walks in the woods and enjoy nature.**

Weather permitting, schedule time during the day to enjoy the outdoors. Take a stroll around a safe neighborhood or park.

✓ **Watch the weather reports and plan ahead.**

Weather forecasts give several days' notice to prepare your week. Be sure to dress for the temperature and weather conditions.



✓ **Dress in layers in comfortable clothing and sneakers or a good walking shoe.**

Several layers of clothing that can be removed easily as you become warmer. Layers will help you guard against overheating, sweating, and eventually becoming colder.

✓ **Workout online to keep your body core in tip top shape.**

Consider tuning into a TV, online, live Zoom, or Instagram workout class. Find free or low-cost exercise videos online to help you do aerobics, dance, stretch, and build strength.

✓ **Do some chores around the house.**

Look for ways to build your fitness profile by being active indoors. Housework such as vacuuming, sweeping, and cleaning all count towards your physical activity goals. And you will knock out some items on your to-do list while gaining health benefits. Walking or running up and down stairs in your home can be a great workout, too.

✓ **Volunteer in your neighborhood or community while maintaining social distance.**

Helping others while helping yourself stay fit is good for your physical, social, and mental health. Look for volunteer opportunities that involve physical activity such as walking dogs for elderly neighbors or shoveling snow. When volunteering, remember to follow social distancing recommendations to keep yourself and others safe.

Source:

<https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/obesity-and-covid-19.html#steps>

