

Cooperative Extension

Small Steps to Get Fit and Healthy for 2014

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It's a New Year.... Are You Ready for a New Start?

Everyone knows the New Year means promises for new activity and healthier eating. The bottom line is that all Americans---young and old need to participate in physical activity all year long. Being physically active on a regular basis can improve overall health as well as reduce the risk of chronic disease. Employers with a Worksite Wellness Program do report improved productivity and morale with those employees who participate in the program. When school age youth have the opportunity to be more physically active, teachers report increased attention span. Here are some suggestions for you to get moving:

Exercise together with friends. Try some aerobic exercise each day that stimulates your heart to beat faster. Try fast paced walking, biking, jogging, dancing, or games like basketball, soccer, baseball, or tennis. Try joining a community sports team or your local YMCA. Adults need at least 2 hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (i.e. brisk walking) every week. A good pair of walking shoes is really important if you begin a walking program. You decide which activities to pick and make it enjoyable. Spend time with active friends for extra fun and support!



Try weights to strengthen your muscles. Getting stronger at all ages is important for your muscles and overall health. Adults in later life can still build muscle which will help them with balance, lifting and everyday activities. Adults need muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days of the week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms). Simple equipment like stretch bands or cans of food for weights can assist with strengthening various muscle groups in your arms, and torso. You can fill empty water bottles with sand or water to use as hand weights.

Flexibility can maintain health. Some simple stretches while watching TV or sitting at your desk at work, will help your muscles to stay strong. Look for classes like yoga, tai chi and pilates. These classes will help you to practice skills that will increase your flexibility.



Balance activities to strengthen your body core. It is important to have strong/flexible muscles in your stomach and back. A strong core gives your body strength and helps you stand taller and look better. Balancing your fitness activities will improve your body health and core.



Play and physical activity can go together. Getting fit means finding a level of fitness that works for you. Try throwing a flyer or jumping rope. Organize a dance party with friends. Try walking your neighbor's dog or hike a nearby trail. Let 2014 be your "active" year and take these small steps to make it the healthiest ever!



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Preventing Microbial Cross-Contamination in the Home

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Preventing cross contamination is one of the best ways to reduce the risk of food illness. Cross contamination in its most basic form is the transfer of bacteria from one surface to another. These surfaces include kitchen counters and cutting boards along with biological surfaces such as your hands, fresh produce or raw meat. The key objective in preventing cross-contamination is to stop the contamination from one surface such as raw meat or poultry to a hard surface such as a cutting board. Ready-to-eat food is also vulnerable to cross-contamination and is defined as any food which is fully prepared and ready to be consumed. This can refer to something as complex as a cooked and carved roasted chicken or as simple as a raw apple. The ultimate objective in preventing cross-contamination is to stop the microbial contamination of all food.

Microbial cross-contamination research is in its infancy. The number of microbes and the direction of their transfer is clearly influenced by moisture. When moisture is present, more microbes can be transferred which can cause food safety issues such as food borne disease. Controlling moisture is key to controlling cross-contamination, but even dry surfaces can transfer small numbers of microbes.



Bacteria are hitchhikers.



Cross-contamination may not be obvious. Imagine cutting up a raw chicken, washing your hands, and then making a salad. Did you turn on the tap when your hands were wet with raw chicken juice? Did you touch that tap with your clean hands? If so, you may have cross-contaminated yourself, and potentially the next food you are preparing.

Here are a few simple practices that can reduce cross contamination when shopping for and preparing meals and snacks.

VISIONS

is a peer reviewed newsletter published three times yearly and sent upon request, without charge.

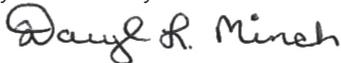
Published by

Rutgers Cooperative Extension
Department of Family & Community Health Sciences

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Desktop publishing by: Arly Ditio Graphics

Printed February, 2014

In the grocery store:

- Use an extra plastic bag to hold your raw meat or poultry and use hand sanitizer after touching the meat/poultry packages in the meat department, if your grocery store offers it
- Place raw meats away from ready-to-eat foods in your grocery cart
- Use a designated grocery bag for raw produce, and a designated bag for raw meat if using reusable shopping bags
- Wash all reusable shopping bags on a regular basis to eliminate microbes

At home:

- Use separate cutting boards for raw meats and ready-to-eat foods
- Store raw meats in sealed bags, or covered containers on the lower shelves of the refrigerator making sure they are below the ready to eat foods
- Use separate utensils for preparing raw meats and serving ready to eat foods
- Clean utensils and cutting boards carefully with soap and hot water between uses
- Thoroughly wash cutting boards, dishes, and utensils (including knives) with soap and hot water after they come in contact with raw meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, and unwashed fresh produce
- Wash your hands after handling raw meats, poultry, fish, and eggs before handling ready to eat foods

All Fats are Not Created Equal – Know the Differences

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Recently, there has been a lot of talk about trans fat, but what is the big deal? Let's look at the types of fats to better understand what a trans fat is and why it is bad for us.

Let's start with the fats that help lower the bad cholesterol, or LDL cholesterol, in your body.

Unsaturated fats are sometimes called "good" fats because they work in your body to help lower the bad cholesterol in your blood. These fats are usually liquid at room temperature.

Unsaturated fats come in two types, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated. Monounsaturated fats are found in many oils including vegetable, olive, canola, peanut, and sunflower oil and also found in avocados, peanut butter, nuts, and seeds. Polyunsaturated fats are found in oils including vegetable, soybean, corn, and safflower oil, as well as, salmon, mackerel, herring, sunflower seeds, and walnuts.



Now onto the fats that can raise the LDL, or bad cholesterol in your body. These fats are called saturated fats and are usually solid at room temperature. They are found in foods that come from animal sources like beef, lamb, lard, cream, butter, and cheese. Other foods that may have saturated fats are baked goods and fried foods. Coconut and palm oils are also saturated.



Last, but not least, are trans fats. Trans fat is a type of fat that is made from unsaturated fats, but changed, so that they become more solid instead of liquid. They are also called "hydrogenated" or "partially hydrogenated oils." These fats raise your LDL cholesterol and lower your good cholesterol (HDL). This is a double problem. Trans fats can be found in foods that are fried like French fries and doughnuts, as well as, baked goods, stick margarines, and shortening.



Why are trans fats not good for you? Trans fats will increase the bad cholesterol and decrease your good cholesterol. This means that more bad cholesterol will be in your blood moving throughout your body. If there is a lot of bad cholesterol circulating in your blood, fatty deposits may build up slowly and may block your blood as it moves through the arteries. This will increase your risk for a heart attack or a stroke.

It is important to make sure you are eating all the types of fats in moderation, and getting mostly unsaturated fats in your diet to help keep the good cholesterol levels high. Aim to eat no more than 2 tablespoons of fat every day, choosing mostly unsaturated fats. Much of the fat we consume is hidden in foods and it is important to consume low-fat foods as much as possible and limit those foods high in saturated fats and trans fats.

Fats in general give us 9 calories per gram. One teaspoon of fat contains 5 grams which means each teaspoon of fat yields 45 calories. The recommended two tablespoons (or 6 teaspoons) of any type of fat is approximately 270 calories.

A small amount of fat yields a rich source of calories as compared with carbohydrates or protein. Make sure you read the nutrition facts label on all food products to keep the level of fats to recommended amounts.

Type of Fat	What Does it Do?	What Foods Have It?
Monounsaturated	Helps raise good (HDL) cholesterol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oils: vegetable, olive, canola, peanut, sunflower Avocados Peanut butter Nuts Seeds
Polyunsaturated	Helps raise good (HDL) cholesterol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oils: Vegetable, soybean, corn, safflower Salmon Mackerel Herring Sunflower seeds Walnuts
Saturated	Can raise bad (LDL) cholesterol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Animal foods - Beef, lamb, lard, cream, butter, and cheese Baked goods Fried foods. Coconut & palm oils
Trans Fat	Can raise bad (LDL) cholesterol and lower good (HDL) cholesterol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fried foods - French fries, doughnuts Baked goods Stick margarines Shortening

Sources:

<http://www.heart.org>

<http://www.eatright.org>

Mahan LK, Escott-Stump S, Raymond JL. Krause's Food & the Nutrition Care Process. St. Louis, Mo.: Elsevier/Saunders; 2012.

Understanding the Limitations of Herbal Supplements

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American consumers are more aware of botanicals, herbs, and spices along with their potential role as home remedies. According to the NY Times, Americans spend \$15 billion a year on unproven herbal supplements for problems such as colds, memory improvement, and hot flashes. People use herbal supplements to treat and manage certain diseases, medical conditions, digestion, or simply for relaxation. Herbal supplements are a subset of botanicals which use plant parts, seeds, berries, roots, leaves, barks, flowers, or the entire plant and they are considered to be a food by the FDA, not a drug. Herbal remedies do not go through the numerous years of extensive research that prescription drugs do. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) only regulates some purified plant derivatives that are used in prescription drugs and over-the-counter medications, but most herbal supplements are not regulated as drugs.

Herbal products can often be mislabeled and may contain additives and contaminants that are not listed on the label. In January 2000, the FDA mandated that herbal supplements must contain labels to help consumers identify the ingredients used and their effects on the body. In the United States, the words "standardized," "certified," or "verified" on a product label does not assure a higher quality product. Beware of the word "natural" as it does not necessarily mean the product is safe. Sometimes herbal supplements may cause life threatening complications such as bleeding, high blood pressure, allergic reactions, or interactions with conventional drugs. They can act as drugs in the body and can have positive or potential negative effects if taken in high doses or if not used as instructed. In some cases, people have experienced negative effects even after following the instructions on the supplement label. Herbal products have active ingredients that can cause a severe or unexpected reaction, especially if the person has a chronic health problem, is pregnant or breast feeding, or is using over-the-counter (OTC) medications. Remember to always check with your health care professional, especially if taking other drugs or if you have a chronic condition. An example of this would be if a person is taking warfarin (Coumadin) to thin the blood and then takes herbs like Gingko Biloba, Garlic, and Ginseng all can reduce the effects of the anti-clotting drugs.

Interaction of Some Herbal Supplements and Some Prescription Drugs:

1. St. John's Wort, garlic, ginkgo, ginseng, saw palmetto, ginger, cranberry interacts with anticoagulants (Warfarin/Coumadin), non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, antiplatelet agents.
2. Garlic, ginkgo, ginseng, cranberry interact with hypoglycemic and anti-coagulant drugs.
3. Ginkgo, St. John's Wort, valerian interacts with Anticonvulsants.
4. St. John's Wort, ginseng, ginger interact with digoxin.
5. Ginkgo, ginseng, kava, cranberry interact with diuretics.
6. Garlic, St. John's Wort, ginseng, cranberry interacts with antiviral medications for HIV infection.
7. St. John's Wort and kava interact with oral contraceptives.
8. St. John's Wort, ginseng, kava, cranberry interact with chemotherapy.

Herbal Supplements and Possible Side Effects:

1. Echinacea: Fatigue, dizziness, headache and gastrointestinal symptoms
2. Garlic Supplements: Nausea, burning sensation in mouth, throat and stomach, risk of bleeding, halitosis and body odor
3. Ginkgo Biloba: Nausea, dyspepsia, headache, risk of bleeding, and heart palpitations
4. Saw Palmetto: Headache and diarrhea
5. Ginseng: Anorexia, rash, changes in blood pressure and headache
6. St John's Wort: Photosensitivity, dry mouth, dizziness and confusion
7. Kava: Linked to liver toxicity and taken off the market due to deaths
8. Valerian: a sleep aid but in some cases causes over stimulation
9. Evening Primrose: Increase risk of seizures in people who have seizure disorders and bleeding in people with bleeding disorders or who take blood thinning medication such as Coumadin or Warfarin

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A study in the New England Journal of Medicine found that 70% of people taking herbal medicines are well educated, have higher-than-average income, and are reluctant to tell their doctors about their complementary and alternative medicine use. The effects of these kinds of herbal supplements could be mild to potent. To avoid potential health hazards, inform your primary care physician, registered dietitian, pharmacist, anesthesiologist, or dentist about your additional use of herbal supplements.



Safety tips before using herbal supplements:

- Look for scientific research and findings.
- Contact the manufacturer to check ingredients and data to validate product's claim.
- Follow supplement instructions on the container.
- Do not exceed recommended dosages.
- Keep a record and take only one supplement at a time to determine its effectiveness.
- Inform your healthcare provider if you have allergies to plants, weeds, or plant pollen.
- Educate yourself on the dangers of medication/herbal supplements, their interactions and other possible side-effects before self-administration.
- Consult with your primary healthcare provider to avoid any possible negative interactions or contraindications if you are a senior or taking multiple medications.
- Consult your physician if you have a blood clotting disorder, cancer, diabetes, an enlarged prostate gland, epilepsy, glaucoma, heart disease, hypertension, Parkinson's disease, history of liver or kidney problems, or a history of strokes before considering herbal supplement use.
- Be cautious about supplements manufactured outside the United States.

There are some herbal supplements that are normally considered safe for self-administration such as chamomile and peppermint; both are used as teas to aid digestion. However, the safe dose depends on the form of the supplement. Manufacturers are required to assure the identity, purity, strength, and composition of recommended doses of dietary supplements. Consumers should check the supplement label for the USP symbol which indicates that it has been manufactured according to the United States Pharmacopeia regulations. To get reliable information about a particular supplement follow these tips:

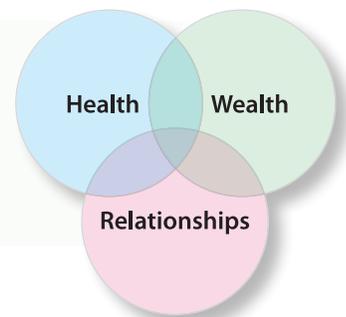


- **Ask your doctor or pharmacist.** Even if they don't know about a specific supplement, they may be able to point you to the latest medical guidance about its uses and risks.
- **Look for scientific research findings.** Two good sources include the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) and the Office of Dietary Supplements. Both have websites that provide information to help consumers make informed choices about dietary supplements.
- **Contact the manufacturer.** If you have questions about a specific product, call the manufacturer or distributor. Ask to talk with someone who can answer questions, such as what data the company has to substantiate its products' claims.

Remember, buyer beware.....and follow the tips listed above for safe supplement use.

Health and Wealth Relationships: Evidence from Recent Research

Barbara O'Neill PhD, *Extension Specialist in Financial Resource Management*



2014 marks the 100th anniversary of Cooperative Extension nationwide. Our organization was established with the passage of the Smith-Lever Act in 1914 to bring research-based knowledge from land-grant universities to American families. 2014 is also the 10th anniversary of Cooperative Extension's **Small Steps to Health and Wealth™** (SSHW) program. Conceived by Rutgers Cooperative Extension in 2004 to integrate health and personal finance education, SSHW has been replicated in over a dozen states.

The SSHW program encourages people to make positive behavior changes to simultaneously improve their health and personal finances. It focuses on small daily action steps (e.g., cutting 100 calories and saving \$1 a day plus loose change) that achieve significant results over time. Most people who successfully lose weight or accumulate wealth do so through small daily personal behavior changes.

So what makes some people practice positive health and financial behaviors while others don't? Many people, including health and financial educators and behavioral researchers, are interested in knowing the answer to this question. Findings from recent research studies provide some interesting insights:

- A study reported in the *Journal of Health Politics, Policy, and Law* explored the use of financial incentives to encourage health-related behavior change in the U.S. and United Kingdom. The authors concluded that, while payments for some aspects of "medical adherence" may be promising, payments for sustained behavior change, such as smoking cessation and weight loss, have thus far shown little long-term effect.
- An article in *Medical Care Research and Review* summarized findings from studies of the use of financial incentives by private employers and public programs to encourage healthy behaviors, wellness activities, and use of preventive services. Unlike the previous article, it concluded that financial incentives, even relatively small ones, can positively influence individuals' health-related behaviors.
- A study reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine* explored the effectiveness of financial incentives for smoking cessation in a work setting. The incentive group had significantly higher rates of smoking cessation than the information only (control) group. Financial incentives for smoking cessation significantly increased rates of smoking cessation.
- A study reported in *Health Economics* examined the influence of personal traits on health and financial behaviors. It found that people who engage in risk-taking behaviors are also less likely to be in good health and less likely to buy insurance.
- A National Bureau of Economic Research working paper explored the role of impatience (called present-bias by the researchers) in making financial decisions. In other words, when people choose immediate gratification instead of taking advantage of larger long-term payoffs. Findings indicated that a measure of impatience is a strong predictor of wealth and investment in health. Impatience was measured using a game designed to elicit preferences for current gratification versus future gain.
- The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences published a study of 1,000 children from birth to age 32 and found that childhood self-control predicts physical health, substance dependence, personal finances, and offending outcomes. Effects were found regardless of intelligence and social class.



So what do all these research findings mean? It appears that financial incentives and certain personality characteristics influence individual health and financial practices. So does education. Sometimes we don't know what we don't know until we are exposed to new information from a video, class, Web site, television show, or other people. Information raises our consciousness about the need to make a change in our lives.



Want to improve your health and/or personal finances? Visit the SSHW program Web site <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/sshw/>. At this Web site, you'll find every chapter of the **Small Steps to Health and Wealth™** workbook available for free downloading. Each chapter describes a behavior change strategy (there are a total of 25) and includes worksheets to "personalize" the strategies to your life. Other Web site features are monthly health and wealth messages, a blog, videos, a workplace wellness newsletter series, downloadable posters that illustrate the high cost of unhealthy behaviors such as smoking, and SSHW research summaries.

Successful Changes: *One Step at a Time...*

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Susan Stephenson-Martin M.S., *CD/N, Preceptor*



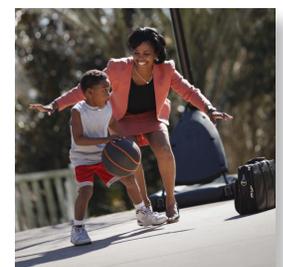
The New Year brings the possibilities of new beginnings and symbolizes a new chapter and an opportunity for a fresh start. A common resolution for many individuals has been to lose weight and create a new healthy lifestyle. For most, this 'resolution' dies within the first month of the new year, with faith lost, only to be restored the following January 1st. Long-lasting results come from lifestyle and behavior changes over time as compared to the temporary 'diet and exercise regimen'. If you feel that going to the gym six days a week and having salad for lunch and dinner is not for you, then these simple lifestyle changes will get you going in the right direction.



- **Drink water, and lots of it!** Many times when you feel hungry, your body is dehydrated. Water has zero calories and keeps the body hydrated and satisfied.
- **Use smaller plates.** A large plate gives the illusion that we need to fill up that plate and eat it all. Start with a smaller plate and wait 20 minutes before getting a second portion.
- **Fill up on vegetables.** Fill at least half of your plate with vegetables. Vegetables contain a multitude of vitamins and minerals that your body needs, as well as, fiber and protein. Veggies are low in calories, so pile them on!
- **Move around more!** Take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator. Park farther away from the store. Walk around the house while talking on the phone and when watching television, do quick exercises like jumping jacks, pushups, sit ups, or lunges during commercials.
- **Choose fruit for dessert.** Think of fruit as your sweet treat. Fruit is a great source of vitamins, minerals and fiber. Strawberries covered in dark chocolate, or peaches and low fat whipped cream are great low-calorie options.
- **Avoid skipping meals.** Waiting longer than 4-5 hours without a meal causes your body to go into starvation and a fat storing mode. Aim for three meals a day with several low calorie snacks in between meals to keep you satisfied throughout the day. Pick snacks low in fat, salt and sugar.
- **When eating out, be mindful.** Ask your server to hold the bread and consider ordering an appetizer for an entrée. If you do order a regular size portion, consider asking the server to place half of it in a "to go" box before getting served.
- **Portion out your snacks.** Avoid eating anything out of the package. Mindful eating helps to keep portions "planned" otherwise we consume more calories than we realize.



Behavioral changes occur slowly and do not happen overnight. Remember to set small, attainable goals to increase your success. Do not try to master a new habit until the previous one has been learned. More importantly, do not give up! If a setback occurs, then start over! Each day brings an opportunity to be successful, so start again and continue to make those changes!



Grow a Salad on your Windowsill

Jim Nichnadowicz, 4-H Agent, Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Union County

Fresh lettuce can be grown right inside your house. All you need are seeds, soil and a sunny windowsill.

A good time to start a windowsill garden is late winter. The longer days will provide the needed sunlight and the warmer temperatures will help your plants grow faster.

One of the best plants to grow in a windowsill garden is leaf lettuce. While head lettuce needs more space, leaf lettuce can be grown in a pot that will easily fit on your windowsill. Leaf lettuce is also able to grow in cooler temperatures, the seeds sprout easily and quickly and it is ready to pick in just 30 to 50 days.

For complete directions on growing lettuce and other plants on your windowsill see the publication "**How to Start a Windowsill Herb Garden**" by James Nichnadowicz at <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/publication.asp?pid=FS387> or contact your local RCE office for a copy.

