The future lies before you, like paths of pure white snow. Be careful how you tread it, for every step will show.

Author unknown

Best wishes for 2010
Eating away from home is challenging for health-conscious consumers. Take time to find the healthier items at your favorite eating places and watch out for these common eating out mistakes:

**Is a baked potato better than fries?**
To be truly healthier than the fries, be sure the traditional potato toppers don't add fat and calories you were bypassing in the first place. For example, the typical baked potato with sour cream and chives packs in 24 grams of fat. One with cheese and broccoli weighs in a bit lower at 16 fat grams. Without the sour cream or cheese, you're looking at a virtually fat free food. Specify that you want your potato topped with steamed vegetables if available, or ask for the butter or sour cream on the side and use only a small amount.

**No such thing as free chips or bread**
Most restaurants greet you with bread or even fried tortilla chips as soon as you sit down. A basket of bread contains around 400 to 1000 calories while a basket of chips contains 700-900 calories. Take a handful of chips or slice of bread then ask your server to remove the basket from the table. If you are hungry, ask for your salad while you look at the menu.

**Don't blame the chicken**
Fast food finally seemed a bit healthier when chains introduced grilled chicken sandwiches. And you'll find them on almost every full-service restaurant menu. But you still have to check. It's not the chicken that's the problem, but what's added to it. Some come with high fat condiments like mayonnaise or special sauces, while others pile on bacon and cheese. Buns are often brushed with butter as well. Ask for a plain chicken breast; then add lettuce, tomato, and any other vegetables available. Top it off with an un-buttered bun.

"I only ate a salad"
Salads are usually touted as healthy on restaurant menus, but smart diners know what to look for. Obviously, one topped with fried chicken tenders or high fat meats, eggs, croutons, and bacon bits isn't a great choice. Neither is one with dressing already added. Choose a salad that goes heavy on dark greens and other vegetables, light on high fat choices; and always order the dressing on the side (dip your fork into it before each bite and you'll use less). When building your own salad at the salad bar, use a light hand with the higher fat toppings already mentioned.

**Bigger is better and cheaper, or is it?**
Fast food restaurants want you to think bigger is better, and cheaper, too. For only pennies more, you can "upgrade" to a larger size of sandwich, french fries and soft drink. Don't fall for it. You only end up paying less for more fat, more calories, and ultimately more weight and health problems. Going from small to super size fries can add 16 fat grams to your meal. A quarter pounder with cheese has 17 more fat grams than a small cheeseburger.

Excessive serving sizes aren't limited to fast food. Full-service restaurants commonly offer huge portions, like half-pound hamburgers, 16 ounce steaks, and unbelievably big bowls of pasta. Share an entree or take home half, but be sure to get it off your plate and into that “doggie bag” before you end up eating it all just because it's there.

Consumers spend more than $566 billion on food prepared away from home every day. You can spend your share of that wisely by recognizing that eating out doesn’t need be an occasion to splurge every time, and that you can make smart, healthy choices.

Source: Food & Health Communications, December 2009
Upcoming Programs

“Saving Energy and Money in the Home”

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Herkimer County will be sponsoring a free workshop on saving energy and money in the home. This workshop is through the EmPowerTM New York program. This workshop is open to the public and is free of charge but is especially targeted to HEAP or EmPower eligible Herkimer County residents.

Wednesday, January 27th, 2010 at 6:30 p.m.

This EmPower NY session will last approximately two hours and will include a free home energy kit to each family. There will also be special home energy door prizes given away. The Cornell Cooperative Extension office is located on Rte. 5 between Herkimer and Little Falls at the Scialdo Business Park. You must pre-register by calling the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Herkimer County office at 315.866.7920. Registration deadline for this class is January 26th.

“Holiday Book Tree” Thanks

We would like to extend a heartfelt “thank you” to all who donated books to our Holiday Book Tree benefiting the Even Start Family Literacy Program. Over 1150 books were collected and will be put to good use.

Recipe

Here’s an easy recipe to warm you up this time of year:

**Cream of Broccoli Soup**

1 package (10 oz.) frozen chopped broccoli, thawed and drained *
1/2 small onion
dash garlic powder
2 Tablespoons flour
1 1/2 cups chicken broth - homemade or canned (low sodium)
1-2 cups skim (fat-free) milk

Place broccoli, onion, garlic powder, flour and chicken broth in blender container: process until almost smooth.

Pour into saucepan and add milk. Stir often until soup comes to a boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer 5-10 minutes to cook onion.

**For homemade chicken broth:**
Simmer chicken bones with celery, onion, carrots (if desired) and water for at least one hour, covered. Refrigerate overnight. Skim off any hardened fat. Remove bones. Strain if desired. Freeze if you do not plan to use within a day.

*Substitute your favorite fresh, frozen, or canned vegetable

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**Nutrition Facts**

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<th>Serving Size</th>
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<tr>
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Vitamin A 15% + Vitamin C 50%
Calcium 1% + Iron 4%

Protein Data: Values are based on 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

Calories: 2,000 2,500
Total Fat: Less than 65g 75g
Saturated Fat: Less than 20g 25g
Cholesterol: Less than 300mg 300mg
Sodium: Less than 2,400mg 2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate: 300g 375g
Dietary Fiber: 25g 30g
Calories per gram:
Fat = 9kcal | Carbohydrate = 4kcal | Protein = 4kcal

Note that calories and other nutrients will vary depending on ingredients chosen.
Feeling a little stressed about what’s going to be on the table tonight? You’re not alone. More than 1/3 of us have no idea what we’re going to feed the family until about 2 hours before meal time.

In spite of all the stress of making a meal choice and the preparation of it, most people consider eating together is a top priority. All that’s necessary is a little pre-planning. Back-up meals in the freezer help make dinner easier.

To create home-cooked convenience, try freezing family size portions of soup, stew and sauces. Use empty cereal boxes for space saving stackable storage. Line a box with a large zip-top plastic freezer bag, folding the edges of the bag over the edges of the box, that way the box supports the bag when filled. Seal the bag and freeze vertically while still inside the box. Once frozen, remove the filled bag, stack horizontally. Label accordingly.

Casseroles make easy meals. The trick is to stock your freezer without tying up all your dishes. Line the bottom and sides of your casserole dish with heavy duty aluminum foil. Allow 2 to 3 inches to extend over the sides. Fill with your prepared favorite recipe. Cover and freeze 2 to 3 hours or until firm. Lift the frozen casserole from dish, using the foil as handles. Place in a large zip-top freezer bag. Label and date. You’ll need an extra large 2 gallon bag for 13 x 9 inch dish and a gallon bag for 9 inch square dishes. Remember that it is easier to write on freezer bags before you fill them.

This is a way to have home cooked goodness as close as your freezer. Let the whole family join in on the fun when making freezer meals. Children learn how to cook and are more willing to try food if they’ve helped prepare it. Chances are even picky eaters will be willing to try something new. Cooking together also can help open lines of communication between parent and child.

Here are some ideas to try:

- Try cooking a 3 pound box of macaroni. You’ll be able to use it for macaroni salad, macaroni & cheese or macaroni and meat sauce. Three easy meals for one week.
- Another week cook a quantity of rice. Make Spanish rice, red beans and rice or in a soup. Rice freezes well. Package in small packages for the freezer.
- Bake a large chicken, making gravy also. Use for a nice Sunday meal with chicken pieces and gravy for hot sandwiches the next day. Use the bones for soup. Even the rice that was cooked ahead can be used in the soup.
- Frozen vegetables can be a quick option to a meal. Instead of buying mixed version, buy large bags of cauliflower, broccoli, carrots, or Brussels sprout. Mix together yourself to provide versatility.
- Buy chicken breast with bone in. Remove the bones and place them in a freezer bag for later use to make a broth for soups. Cut up the breast into strips to use for a quick stir fry. Beef London broil or any steak can be cut up for stir-fry too.
- Make a spaghetti sauce in a large quantity. Use for a meal, then freeze balance for another time. Remember, leave a 1/2-inch head space in container to allow for expansion.

With a little preplanning, your freezer can produce quick and nourishing meals. Stress level – gone!!!

Submitted by Mary Ann Walrath, Nutrition Program Educator, retired
Caution with Heating During Winter

As families look for ways to save money in tough economic times, there is an increased risk of carbon monoxide (CO) poisonings and fire deaths associated with the use of alternative heating and power sources. The U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is urging consumers to check all home heating systems from fireplaces to furnaces, including any back-up power systems.

To prevent CO poisoning tragedies from occurring, CPSC urges consumers to:

- Schedule a yearly professional inspection of all fuel-burning home heating systems, including furnaces, boilers, fireplaces, wood stoves, water heaters, chimneys, flues and vents.
- As a second line of defense, install carbon monoxide alarms meeting the requirements of UL 2034 Single and Multiple Station Carbon Monoxide Alarms or CSA 6.19 Residential Carbon Monoxide Alarming Devices in the home. Make sure the batteries are fresh and working. Replace the batteries annually at the spring or autumn time changes.
- Activate the test button on the CO alarm monthly to ensure proper operation.
- NEVER operate a portable gasoline powered generator in an enclosed space such as a garage, shed or crawlspace, or in the home.
- Place space heaters on a level, hard, and nonflammable surface such as a ceramic tile floor, not on rugs or carpets. Keep the heater at least three feet from bedding, drapes, furniture, and other flammable materials, and keep out of the flow of foot traffic. Keep children and pets away from space heaters.
- Keep portable generators as far away from the home as possible – away from open doors, windows or vents that could allow deadly carbon monoxide into the home.
- Use a space heater that has been tested to the latest safety standards and certified by a nationally-recognized testing laboratory. These heaters will have the most up-to-date safety features. An unvented gas space heater that meets current safety standards will shut off if oxygen levels fall too low.
- Do not use portable propane space heaters indoors or in any confined space unless they are specifically designed for indoor use. Always follow the manufacturer’s directions for proper use.
- Never use gas or electric stoves to heat the home. They are not intended for that purpose and can pose a CO or fire hazard.

CPSC also urges consumers to follow these home heating safety tips to prevent fires:

- Place space heaters on a level, hard, and nonflammable surface such as a ceramic tile floor, not on rugs or carpets. Keep the heater at least three feet from bedding, drapes, furniture, and other flammable materials, and keep out of the flow of foot traffic. Keep children and pets away from space heaters.
- To prevent the risk of fire, NEVER leave a space heater on when you go to sleep or place a space heater close to any sleeping person. Turn the heater off if you leave the area.
- Never use gasoline in a kerosene space heater. Even small amounts of gasoline mixed with kerosene can increase the risk of a fire.
- Have fireplace flues and chimneys inspected for leakage and blockage by creosote or debris.
- Open the fireplace damper before lighting a fire and keep it open until the ashes are cool. An open damper may help prevent build-up of poisonous gases inside the home.
- Store fireplace ashes in a fire-resistant container and cover it with a lid. Keep the container outdoors and away from combustibles. Dispose of ashes carefully keeping them away from combustibles, dry leaves or trash.

Source: CPSC Press Release 12/22/09
Treating Your Body Like a Computer: Trouble-Shooting Tips

If your body was a computer, would it be receiving lots of “error” messages? Is it beginning to run slower and take longer to "start?" Here’s a checklist to help optimize your performance and prevent crashing as you start the new year.

✔ Are you trying to run too many programs at the same time?

If you’re operating less efficiently because there are too many activities making demands on your system, shut down some programs. For example, if time is tight, rather than make a special company dinner from "scratch," invite people for a potluck meal with everyone bringing a dish to pass.

You may actually accomplish more if you don’t try to accomplish several things at the same time.

Researchers, such as Dr. Earl Miller, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Picower professor of neuroscience, are finding that multi-tasking can be less efficient than doing one task at a time, especially if the tasks are more complex.

If you do multi-task, combine a task that doesn’t demand as much input from your system as the other task like working out on a treadmill while watching TV.

✔ Is your anti-virus software up-to-date and running?

If you’re susceptible to every bug that comes around, it’s time to check if you’re eating right, getting enough sleep, being physically active and reducing stress. The cost and time for “repairs” may be greater than the amount needed for prevention.

✔ Is your battery dangerously low?

Recharge your battery before it loses power completely. Habit #7 in Stephen Covey’s The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People is "Sharpen the Saw." Covey tells the story of a woodcutter whose productivity decreased after sawing for several days straight. Each day his saw became duller and duller.

Covey advocates a balanced program for self-renewal in these four areas of your life: physical, social/emotional, mental and spiritual.

Recharge by eating healthy, getting some physical activity, making meaningful connections with others, stimulating your mind and devoting time to your spiritual renewal through such means as time spent in nature, music, prayer or service.

✔ Are you bogged down by unneeded files and programs?

Remove anything from your life that isn’t needed and slows your overall performance. For example:

- Do you still belong to a club or organization that no longer meets your needs or interests? The time you’re giving this activity is taking time from something else. Move on!
- Are you ironing (what’s an iron, some of you may say!) the whole shirt when only the collar will show under your sweater?

✔ Do you need to hit "escape," "undo" or "delete?"

Your computer offers several options if you change your mind about a decision. Offer yourself that same choice with your life.

You may have a reputation for always saying "yes" to a request for help, regardless of how busy you are. The next time, try saying "I have another commitment for that time." It’s not necessary to elaborate and give an explanation.

For more ideas see page 8 “Do a Don’t Do List!”

Time to reboot

Now, that you’ve finished trouble-shooting your personal system, consider making some changes. Then, reboot your body and enjoy the benefits in the coming year.

Source: University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Food Reflections Newsletter, December 2009
Indoor Allergies Common in Winter

Colder temperatures can bring some relief to those allergic to mold and pollen. But winter doesn't mean the end of runny noses, itchy eyes and wheezing for asthma and allergy sufferers.

Spending more time indoors can mean more problems with dust mites, pet dander, cigarette smoke, gas fumes and household sprays and chemicals, any of which can trigger asthma symptoms.

Here are tips for minimizing the chances of an allergic reaction or asthma flare-up during the winter months:

- Mold and dust mites thrive in humidity, so keep indoor humidity level below 35 percent.
- Turn on exhaust fans when showering and cooking to remove excess humidity and cut down on odors.
- Replace your furnace filter every two to three months and use high-efficiency filters, which can remove up to 30 times more allergens. Keep the furnace fan turned on.
- Clean thoroughly to reduce dust mites, which eat household dust, a mix of shed hair, flakes of skin, soil particles, clothing fibers and pollen. Vacuum floors and furniture using a vacuum with a HEPA filter frequently. Don't keep many old books, stuffed animals and knickknacks, which are also places where mites collect.
- Mites multiply in carpeting, so, if possible, go with hardwood or tile floors in bedrooms. Consider using allergy covers for mattresses, box springs and pillows. Hot water kills dust mites, so try to wash bed linens and nightclothes in water above 130 degrees.
- First frost kills most mold outdoors. Even so, keep children from playing in areas that mold prefers, such as dark, damp wooded areas and piles of fallen leaves.
- When using a humidifier, maintain it properly. Keep it clean and change the water frequently to avoid mold and bacteria growth. Spray central humidifiers with an anti-mold agent.
- If you have dog and cat allergies, avoid being in households with pets, or at least keep contact to a minimum. Keep pets out of the bedroom if you are allergic.

More information
The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America has more on preventing allergic reactions at www.aafa.org

Source: New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center, December 29, 2009

Saving Energy in the New Year

Here are two sources to check out:

Resolve to Save Energy in the New Year
This website will help you make SMART energy-saving resolutions that last longer than the average new-year gym membership, so check it.

Stay Warm, Save Money
This a good place to start for ideas on how you can save energy while staying toasty warm.
http://www.energysavers.gov/seasonal/
Do a Don't Do List!

"I know that keeping lists can be beneficial in terms of helping us figure out what's important. But if, as many of us did, you got carried away with your lists, you may have to reconsider and cut your lists back to more realistic proportions." Source: Elaine St. James, Living the Simple Life

"Reducing the volume of our activities makes it possible not only to ease time pressure but to get more out of life overall." Source: Ralph Keyes, TIMELOCK — How Life Got So Hectic and What You Can Do About It

STOP! Before you read any further, take out a piece of paper. Draw a large circle.

Ready now?

Look at the circle you've drawn and think of it as a clock with 24 hours. Halfway around would equal 12 hours.

Put a dot at the top of the circle and label that dot with the time you get up to begin your day. Put a second dot at the point on the circle proportional to the number of hours later when you go to bed. Draw a pie-shaped wedge to the center of your circle from the two dots.

For example, if you sleep about eight hours, your "sleep section" will fill about one third of your 24-hour clock.

Next, quickly think through a typical day. Divide the rest of the clock into wedges that show how much time is spent in other activities. Label the different areas: work, eating, meal preparation, commuting, personal grooming, work around house, watch TV, etc.

Do You Need a "Don't Do" List?

If you're like most people, your circle could use a few more hours to accommodate your daily "to do" list activities. Or, you might wish for extra hours to accomplish personal goals such as learning to speak another language.

Rather than adding "take a time management class" to your "to do" list, consider starting a "don't do" list. You may discover what the authors cited at the beginning of this article found: Doing LESS can bring MORE enjoyment to your life. Especially if doing less allows you to spend time doing more to contribute to your health and happiness!

Exercise and diet are two areas often given short shrift in the typical time-squeezed day. Yet they are important for our overall quality of life. Free up your time so you can achieve your personal fitness goals.

What Can You Stop Doing?

"Great idea," you may be saying, "but how?" Here are some tips from time-savvy ADA registered dietitians who were asked: What one or more things have you STOPPED doing to have more time to focus on eating healthy and exercising? Perhaps one will trigger a "don't do" for you.

- "The most helpful thing that I can think of that I have done to make more time is that we moved our TV set out of our living room on the main floor of our home, to the rec room in our basement. I watch very little TV now that I have to make the intentional decision to go downstairs to watch it; what I do watch is usually planned watching and not something I just happened to get interested in because the set was on and it caught my eye."

- "I also refuse to buy any clothing for me or my family members that requires ironing."

(continued on page 9)
Do a Don’t Do List!

- "I replaced styling my hair, mousse and hair spray and got a wash and wear haircut so I can work out during my lunch hour and still get back to work."
- "Instead of getting together with girlfriends for birthday lunches, we get together for birthday runs or bike rides."
- "Don’t stay up late watching lame shows on TV. Go to bed early, get up early, and head to the gym to exercise. You’ll feel better all day long."
- "Don’t go near the kitchen or any place else there’s food while you’re on the telephone."

"Don’t keep searching your calendar for an hour block of time to go to the gym or health club and away from your family -- look for those opportunities to play and be active -- it counts!!! Playing in the park, biking, walking at the zoo, raking and playing in the leaves are all fun for kids and provide a chance to be active. Physical activity...it’s everywhere you go!!!"

Now. Go back to the circle that you divided into time spent on daily activities. Look it over and ask "What can I leave out?" Start thinking "don't do" and start "don't doing" it NOW!

Source: University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Cook it Quick newsletter, December 2009

Heart Attacks are More Common in Winter

You probably know from experience that winter brings a surge in colds and flu. But did you know winter is also the season for heart attacks?

Frigid air causes blood vessels to constrict as the body tries to prevent heat loss.

This is a natural response that can also put people with heart conditions and those involved in strenuous exercise at greater risk of having a heart attack.

The narrowing raises blood pressure and can reduce oxygen flow to the heart. Combined with a strenuous activity, such as shoveling snow, this can strain the heart, triggering a heart attack in those at risk.

Symptoms of a heart attack may include pain, discomfort or a squeezing sensation in the chest, pain in the arms, back, neck or jaw, shortness of breath, nausea or a cold sweat, according to the American Heart Association. Though women may also experience pain, they are more likely than men to experience shortness of breath, nausea or vomiting and back or jaw pain.

A heart attack can be mistaken for a pulled muscle, so take any post-shoveling symptoms seriously.

To lessen your risk of winter-time heart trouble, Anderson has these suggestions:

- Don’t jump out of bed and get right to shoveling your driveway. Limber up by stretching or walking before you start.
- Dress properly. Wear windproof and waterproof outer garments, place a scarf over your mouth and nose to warm up the air before you breathe it in and wear layers.
- Bundling up will help maintain your body heat.
- To avoid overexertion, try the less strenuous technique of pushing the snow with the shovel rather than lifting it. Also, take frequent breaks -- shovel for 15 minutes, then rest for 15.
- If you’re over the age of 50 and are overweight, sedentary, smoke or have had a heart attack, consult a doctor before shoveling snow. You may want to hire a local teen-ager to do the job for you.

More information

The American Heart Association website has more on cold weather and heart attacks. See: www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=4570

Source: New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center news release, December 2009
Indoor Tanning: The Risks of Ultraviolet Rays

Sunlamps and tanning beds promise consumers a bronzed body year-round, but the ultraviolet (UV) radiation from these devices poses serious health risks.

“Although some people think that a tan gives them a ‘healthy’ glow, any tan is a sign of skin damage,” says Sharon Miller, M.S.E.E., a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) scientist and international expert on UV radiation and tanning.

“A tan is the skin’s reaction to exposure to UV rays,” says Miller. “Recognizing exposure to the rays as an ‘insult,’ the skin acts in self-defense by producing more melanin, a pigment that darkens the skin. Over time, this damage will lead to prematurely aged skin and, in some cases, skin cancer.”

Two types of UV radiation that penetrate the skin are UV-B and UV-A rays.

- UV-B rays penetrate the top layers of skin and are most responsible for sunburns.
- UV-A rays penetrate to the deeper layers of the skin and are often associated with allergic reactions, such as a rash.

Both UV-B and UV-A rays damage the skin and can lead to skin cancer. Tanning salons use lamps that emit both UV-A and UV-B radiation.

Cancer Risk

Exposure to UV radiation—whether from the sun or from artificial sources such as sunlamps used in tanning beds—increases the risk of developing skin cancer, according to the National Cancer Institute (NCI). Melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, is linked to getting severe sunburns, especially at a young age.

In July 2009, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), part of the World Health Organization, concluded that tanning devices that emit UV radiation are more dangerous than previously thought. IARC moved these devices into the highest cancer risk category: “carcinogenic to humans.” Previously, it had categorized the devices as “probably carcinogenic to humans.”

Development of cancer is a long process that may take decades. Therefore, IARC also recommended banning commercial indoor tanning for those younger than 18 years to protect them from the increased risk for melanoma and other skin cancers.

IARC’s conclusions and recommendations were based on its 2006 review of 19 studies conducted over 25 years on the use of indoor tanning equipment. The review found evidence of:

- an association between indoor tanning and two types of skin cancer: squamous cell carcinoma and melanoma
- an association between UV-emitting tanning devices and cancer of the eye (ocular melanoma)
- both UV-A and UV-B rays causing DNA damage, which can lead to skin cancer in laboratory animals and humans
- the risk of melanoma of the skin increasing by 75 percent when tanning bed use started before age 35

IARC’s review had some limitations, says Ron Kaczmarek, M.D., M.P.H., an FDA epidemiologist who analyzed the review. Limitations include possible inaccuracy of people’s memories of their tanning experiences, not knowing the amount of UV radiation emitted by each tanning device, and the inability to separate the effects of individuals’ indoor and outdoor exposure. Nevertheless, IARC concluded that there is convincing evidence of an association between the use of indoor tanning equipment and melanoma risk, and that the use of tanning beds should be discouraged.

“It’s well established that UV radiation from the sun causes skin cancer,” says Miller. “Since lamps used in tanning beds emit UV radiation, the use of indoor tanning devices also increases your risk of skin cancer.”

(continued on page 11)
Indoor Tanning: The Risks of Ultraviolet Rays

Other Risks
In addition to the serious risk of skin cancer, tanning can cause:

- Premature aging. Tanning causes the skin to lose elasticity and wrinkle prematurely. This leathery look may not show up until many years after you’ve had a tan or sunburn.
- Immune suppression. UV-B radiation may suppress proper functioning of the body’s immune system and the skin’s natural defenses, leaving you more vulnerable to diseases, including skin cancer.
- Eye damage. Exposure to UV radiation can cause irreversible damage to the eyes.
- Allergic reaction. Some people who are especially sensitive to UV radiation may develop an itchy red rash and other adverse effects.

Advocates of tanning devices sometimes argue that using these devices is less dangerous than sun tanning because the intensity of UV radiation and the time spent tanning can be controlled. But there is no evidence to support these claims. In fact, sunlamps may be more dangerous than the sun because they can be used at the same high intensity every day of the year—unlike the sun whose intensity varies with the time of day, the season, and cloud cover.

Tanning in Children and Teens
FDA is particularly concerned about children and teens being exposed to UV rays. Intermittent exposures to intense UV radiation leading to sunburns, especially in childhood and teen years, increase the risk of melanoma, according to NCI.

FDA believes that limiting sun exposure and using sunscreen or sunblock are particularly important for children since these measures can prevent sunburn at a young age.

NCI reports that women who use tanning beds more than once a month are 55 percent more likely to develop melanoma, according to NCI.

All use of tanning beds increases the risk of skin cancer. Certain practices are especially dangerous. These include:

- Failing to wear the goggles provided, which can lead to short- and long-term eye injury.
- Starting with long exposures (close to the maximum time for the particular tanning bed), which can lead to burning. Because sunburn takes 6 to 48 hours to develop, you may not realize your skin is burned until it’s too late.
- Failing to follow manufacturer-recommended exposure times on the label for your skin type.
- Tanning while using certain medications or cosmetics that may make you more sensitive to UV rays. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist first.

For More Information:
Sun Safety: Save Your Skin!
www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm049090.htm

Tanning
www.fda.gov/Radiation-EmittingProducts/Radiation EmittingProductsandProcedures/Tanning/default.htm

Report to Congress: Labeling Information on the Relationship Between the Use of Indoor Tanning Devices and Development of Skin Cancer or Other Skin Damage
http://www.fda.gov/MedicalDevices/DeviceRegulationandGuidance/GuidanceDocuments/default.htm

What is Your Risk of Developing Skin Cancer?
www.skincarephysicians.com/skincancernet/risk.html

Source: FDA Consumer Health Information, Nov. 2009
To Snack or Not to Snack

The effect of snacking on body weight, blood lipids and the risk of heart disease has long been a matter of debate. Some studies have found an association between snacking and obesity while others have linked increased meal frequency with lower body weight in men but not women. Other researchers have found that larger but less frequent meals increase the risk of obesity, heart disease and diabetes. Below are tips on snacking and eating smaller, more frequent meals for better health and weight control.

Don’t Snack When Not Hungry

Researchers in a recent study, published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, fed subjects a snack after lunch but before they became hungry. Surprisingly, they found that snacking when not hungry, did not reduce the amount of food consumed at the next meal. Nor did such a snack increase the time before the subjects became hungry and requested dinner. The results of this study suggest that snacking when not hungry may promote increased calorie intake and weight gain.

Skipping Breakfast is a Big Mistake

Skipping breakfast can spell disaster. A study that randomly assigned overweight people to a weight program found that those who consumed breakfast lost significantly more weight over a twelve-week program. This could be because those who skip breakfast tend to select more calorie-dense foods later in the day, than those who regularly eat breakfast. A healthy breakfast is the one meal that people should be encouraged to eat even if they are not hungry.

Smaller More Frequent Meals are Beneficial

A recent study in the International Journal of Obesity examined the impact of feeding subjects one third of the average daily calorie intake, either as a single meal or as several small meals. This study found that obese men consumed 27% fewer calories at their next meal when the same food was divided into several small meals compared to when it was consumed as a single meal. Eating smaller but more frequent meals may help people feel satisfied while consuming fewer calories.

Researchers of one controlled study compared the effects of eating the exact same diet either as 3 meals daily or by nibbling 17 snacks a day. Blood lipids and lipoprotein levels were measured after 2 weeks of these meal patterns. Total cholesterol and LDL were 8.5% and 13.5% lower, respectively, in the subjects who nibbled.

Increasing meal frequency, regardless of changes in body weight, will usually improve blood lipids and probably reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease in most patients. However, if snacking leads to weight gain then it would increase the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Another major advantage to eating smaller but more frequent meals is that stomach capacity is likely to shrink. A study that examined the stomach capacity of people on a very-low-calorie diet for 4 weeks showed that it was reduced by 27 to 36% compared to control subjects who maintained their usual eating habits. People who regularly eat smaller, more frequent meals should begin to feel more satisfied with less food over time.

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To Snack or Not to Snack

The Bottom Line

People who are overweight should be discouraged from starving and stuffing. Skipping meals and going hungry appears to increase the desire for foods with a high calorie density. This is detrimental for weight control because foods with a high calorie density generally provide less satiety. When people feel less satisfied, they usually end up consuming more calories. Eating until one is uncomfortably full, or stuffed, will likely increase stomach capacity over time. Consuming large but infrequent meals has been shown to raise serum cholesterol and it may also promote overeating and insulin resistance. Eating large but infrequent meals also may promote obesity and have other adverse metabolic effects.

It is clear that more research is needed to clarify the metabolic impact of snacking or increased meal frequency on weight control.

- However, eating more foods high in fiber and with a lower calorie density should be encouraged, based on what is known.
- This will naturally lead to more frequent meals that contain fewer calories than meals that are low in fiber and high in fat with more concentrated calories.
- Eat breakfast, then follow your hunger cues.
- Use will-power to make the right choices, not starve yourself.

Planning ahead is important so you have access to healthy snacks throughout the day whenever hunger arises.

Source: Communicating Food For Health, December 2009

Teddy bears are objects of unconditional love. They snuggle into beds at night. They travel in backpacks, in car seats and on airplanes. They endure sticky fingers, dusty corners and gooey kisses. They’ve even been known to stand in for pacifiers and chew toys. It’s no wonder that this best buddy might just need a bath!

Start by vacuuming off any dust and loose grime. Then check for split seams; repair them before cleaning. If teddy has a sound box or other mechanical or electronic device, it will need to be removed. Otherwise, washing will cause it to rust or create a corrosive residue and it won’t work anymore.

If there are any particularly nasty stains, pre-treat them by rubbing a little bit of liquid detergent directly on the stain. Then put teddy into a pillowcase and secure it shut with a knot, rubber band, or hair elastic. Although teddy won’t mind being washed with other stuffed animals, don’t overfill the pillowcase. Those cozy companions need room to move around. Wash in the washing machine on the gentle cycle with a small amount of detergent. Before putting teddy in the dryer, check to make sure the stains are gone. Close up the pillowcase again and put teddy in the dryer on low heat.

If teddy’s fur needs a bit of “fluffing,” brush it gently with an old, clean hairbrush.

Source: Cleaning Matters, November/December 2009
Beat the Blahs

The holidays are over and spring is months away for most of us. If dreary dark days are giving your family the blahs, here are more than a dozen ideas for fun on snowy afternoons or for impromptu gatherings on Saturday mornings with neighbors and cousins. Many of these would make ideal projects for at-home birthday parties, too. (Packing the kids off to the grandparents? You might want to send these suggestions along!)

We started at the library for how-to’s and inspiration, and here are some of the books we used.
- *Wiggles, Tickles and Rhymes* (Pierce County Library System Early Learning Department)
- *Norma Toraya’s Paper Puppet Palooza* (Quayside Publishing Group, 2009)
- *GrandLoving: Making Memories with Your Grandchildren*, by Sue Johnson and Julie Carlson (Heartstrings Press)

We also surfed the ‘net for help, and here are web sites you may find useful.
- *I Will Knot* (www.iwillknot.com)
- *About.com* (www.about.com)

Some of these projects will delight toddlers through teens; others are better for kids with some small motor control. Of course, adult supervision is important with younger children and when knives, sharp scissors and trips outside the yard are involved.

- Dig out the cookie cutters and large russet potatoes for potato printing. Even old potatoes work well; cut them with such simple shapes as tulip, star or heart. Stamp your designs with tempera or fabric paint on paper, cloth scraps or T-shirts.
- Want a more detailed stamp? Copy a coloring book image or create your own on a shoe innersole, cut it out and then mount it on a small wood scrap.
- If you’d rather have your kids create prints without paint or ink, put a sheet of brightly colored construction paper in a sunny window and arrange objects on it (maybe that tulip-shaped cookie cutter). In a few days, you’ll have a sun print! (You can also buy special paper for sunprinting.)
- Another idea for bookmarks: ribbon tied to old keys, charms or other found objects.
- Cut out paper dolls that can be downloaded for free from the Internet. You’ll find “Berenstain Bears Dress-Up Dolls” on about.com and all sorts of other dolls, including a cat with several historic costumes, at www.familycrafts.about.com. Older kids may like the “Twilight” character dolls.
- Let your imagination run wild (or goofy, as the case might be) with the paper dolls, paper puppets and other cut-outs. Trim clothes with glitter and paper doilies, add arms, legs, yarn hair, bead jewelry or...you name it! Try brass fasteners to give a cut-out extra arms and legs that move.

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Beat the Blahs

- Play “I Spy with My Little Eye.” The rules are simple: the person who is “it” selects an object that everyone can see and says, “I spy with my little eye something that is red,” or something that starts with “p,” or “s” or “a.” Or whatever. The family member who guesses correctly gets to make the next selection.
- Play tag with your shadows. Even if it’s really, really cold, you can probably bundle up enough for ten minutes in the sunshine chasing each other’s shadows.
- Stretch your baby’s imagination with fingerplays like “The Itsy Bitsy Spider” and “Five Little Monkeys.”

Swap Trash and Treasures

In keeping with New Year’s resolutions and the general 2010 focus on going green, get together with friends and family to swap things you no longer want or can use (maybe even including the white elephants that arrived as holiday gifts).

Take over a large room in someone’s house or the meeting room in an apartment complex and consider setting up “stations” by kind of item (sports equipment, clothing, craft supplies, toys, books, furniture) or by size (little kids, grade school kids, teenagers, adults). Be sure to create a space for odds and ends: the incomplete puzzles, fruitcake tins, jars of buttons, fabric remnants, old magazines. Chances are, what you consider trash is ideal for a neighbor’s next craft project—or Cousin Kyle’s science fair entry!

Source: Adapted from News for Parents, January 2010 from Parenting Express.


Cybersafety Booklet for Parents and Kids Now Available

A new booklet released by the Federal Trade Commission and other government agencies helps parents and teachers steer kids safely through the online and mobile phone worlds.

*Net Cetera: Chatting with Kids About Being Online* tells parents and teachers what they need to know to talk to kids about issues like cyberbullying, sexting, mobile phone safety, and protecting the family computer. Talking to kids about these topics can help them avoid behaving rudely online; steer clear of inappropriate content like pornography, violence, or hate speech; and protect themselves from contact with bullies, predators, hackers, and scammers.

The booklet is available at OnGuardOnline.gov, the federal government’s online safety Web site. OnGuardOnline.gov is a partnership of more than a dozen federal agencies and the technology industry. Like all the consumer education resources at the site, Net Cetera is free and available for public use. At OnGuardOnline, parents can download sections of the booklet, link to it, or post it on their own site.

Source: Federal Trade Commission release 12/16/09