Follow the Three “R’s”:

› Respect for self
› Respect for others
› Responsibility for all your actions.

Source: Dalai Lama, 2007
Most people have little idea whether they’re eating a balanced diet or not. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) wants to change that. The USDA released the MyPyramid Menu Planner, a new state-of-the-art, on-line nutrition guidance tool to help individuals and homemakers plan healthier menus based on the recommendations of the MyPyramid food guidance system and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

According to Dr. Brian Wansink, Executive Director of the USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP), the new MyPyramid Menu Planner is the latest in a series of on-line nutrition tools developed by CNPP. The Planner is provided free of charge to the public and can help motivate consumers to make healthier food choices. According to Wansink, “It has three benefits. Based on the information you provide, it interactively shows whether your diet is balanced and allows you to track it. It gives you an easy way to know whether you are losing or gaining weight based on what you plan to eat. And it helps you plan upcoming meals.”

To use the Planner, go to www.MyPyramid.gov and click on the MyPyramid Menu Planner link.

The Menu Planner will be useful to not only those interested in healthful and nutritious diets, but also high school and middle school classes, and dietitians, health professionals, and nutrition educators for use in counseling and educational programming.

After a person enters his or her age, sex, height, weight and physical activity level, they can begin entering food items and amounts they might consume each day. The screen displays visual feedback as each item is added. From this, various reports can be seen and printed which include a daily, weekly or family menu, a breakdown by food item, and goal setting worksheets.

Source: MyPyramid.gov

Healthy Eating PodCasts Now Available

The MyPyramid website has added another exciting new feature. Short (less than 3 minutes) PodCasts are posted to the website every month. In each PodCast, Dr. Brian Wansink, Executive Director of USDA’s Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, interviews people or posts a story in news format describing how small steps can make a big difference for people trying to make changes in their weight and health.

View the current releases at www.mypyramid.gov/podcasts.

✓ January: New Year’s Resolutions - Dr. Wansink interviews customers in the supermarket about their new year’s resolutions.
✓ February: Just Get Moving - Dr. Wansink and his daughter, Audrey, find out how different parents keep their families physically active on a daily basis.
✓ March: Nutrition Gatekeeper - Dr. Wansink heads back to the supermarket for interviews with moms who select healthy foods their families will really eat.
✓ April: MyPyramid Menu Planner - Dr. Wansink discusses how the Menu Planner will show you how your food choices add up in comparison to your daily goals.
Whether it’s a favorite spot in the park, along a stream or in your own backyard, it feels good to relax with a fun, laid-back meal. Picnic food always tastes so good.

Play it Cool
Food needs to be kept colder than 40° to prevent bacteria from growing. Here are some tips to maintain a proper temperature.

☺ When it goes into a cooler, make sure the food is cold and in containers with snug secure lids.
☺ If any food can be frozen, put them in the cooler frozen. This helps keep other foods cold.
☺ As the ice melts, it will seep into the bottom of the cooler. Ice packs (gel or hard pack forms) are good alternatives.
☺ Don’t open your cooler until you’re ready to unpack it. If a lot of beverages are needed, use a separate cooler.
☺ Opt for foods that are least likely to spoil, such as breads, hard cheese, canned meats, baked beans, fresh fruits and vegetables.
☺ Add a damp warm cloth in a plastic bag for easy clean up.
☺ Fill ice cube trays with some of your picnic beverages and freeze. Just before leaving and add cubes to your jugs. Your beverage will be cold and not diluted by regular ice cubes.
☺ Don’t carry leftovers home. Discard them. Any food left out for 2 hours or more can be harmful (even if it looks good)
☺ To keep watermelon cold. Cut watermelon off rind and place into a large covered container and refrigerate until time to place in cooler.

Burger Tips
Use clean hands to gently shape ground beef into patties. Handle as little as possible. Arrange in a single layer on a cookie sheet and freeze covered with wax paper. Remove and wrap tightly. Place in plastic bag and place in bottom of cooler.

Ice Tea recipe
Gallon container filled with water 5-8 tea bags. Tie tea bags together and add to boiling water. Cover and let stand 5-10 minutes (depending on strength desired).

Remove tea bags. Chill and serve.

*Lemonade may be added for flavor.

Note: “Sun Tea” (tea made at room temperature for 6-8 hours) is not considered safe since the temperature does not get high enough for a long enough time. Bacteria in tea needs to be killed by using water that is 195 degrees F and steeped for 3-5 minutes, then chilled. Do not store at room temperature.

Pasta Salad

Dressing:
1/3 cup cider vinegar
1/4 teaspoon dry mustard
1 tablespoon oil
1/8 teaspoon pepper
1 teaspoon dried dill weed

Salad:
2 cups rotini (spiral pasta)
2 cups frozen mixed vegetables
1/2 cup red bell pepper strips
1 small onion chopped
8 cherry tomatoes, quartered
1/2 cup sliced cucumber

In jar with tight-fitting lid, combined all dressing ingredients; shake well.

Cook pasta and mixed vegetables in 3 quarts boiling water to desired doneness as directed on package. Drain; rinse thoroughly with cold water to cool rapidly. In large serving bowl, combine cooled pasta mixture and remaining salad ingredients. Pour dressing over salad; toss gently.

*Variation: Substitute 1/2 cup broccoli florets for 1/2 cup mixed vegetables.

Yield: 8 servings; serving size 1/2 cup (100 calories, 2 grams fat, 0 grams trans fat, 2 grams fiber, 10 mg sodium)
Even Start asks you to include some humorous books about food to your picnic baskets this summer. Add a few giggles and guffaws to your menu!

Spread out your blanket and pick a book from one of these favorites.

**It's a Spoon, Not a Shovel** by Caralyn Buehner

*Pop-eyed animals with exaggerated expressions, sly humor, and a touch of the grass are the protagonists in this book on proper etiquette. All but one of the answers to the multiple choice questions are extremely silly, and the letters corresponding to the correct answers are hidden in the pictures. A fun learning experience children will hopefully bring to your table!*

**Sam's Snack** by Daniel Pelham

*You've never seen a lunch packed like this before! In this lunch box book Sis vents her jealousy of Sam by planting all kinds of creepy crawlies in his food. This ingenious pop-up book is spread with playful verse that helps the reader guess each gross surprise Sam has coming. Yuck! Kids will love it!*

**Mary Had a Little Jam** by Bruce Lansky

*This book is an all new take on Mother Goose. Can you match these silly nursery rhymes to the originals?*

Peter, Peter, sugar eater, always wanted food much sweeter. 
Adding sugar was a blunder. 
Now he is a toothless wonder.

or

Mary had a little jam; she spread it on a waffle. And if she hadn't eaten ten, she wouldn't feel so awful.

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**Enjoy!**

Shared by: Rebecca Benson, Even Start Program
GET YOUR FINANCIAL HOUSE IN ORDER

Looking for a way to organize the bills, credit cards offers, bank statements and other financial mail you get every month? Here are some ideas to help you get started:

1. Limit the amount of paperwork coming into your home.

Did you know you can opt out of pre-approved credit and insurance offers by calling 1-888-567-8688? You can choose to opt out for five years or permanently. It may take up to two months to see a decrease in your mail. Meanwhile, shred all unwanted mail containing personal information.

Consider automating your bill payments. If you have direct deposit of payroll, pension or Social Security checks, you know how convenient it can be.

Arrange to have utility bills, insurance premiums, mortgage payments or other recurring charges automatically paid out of a deposit account. Consider an automatic payroll or deposit account deduction for saving or investing purposes, too. Talk with your employer and your financial institution about setting these up and about any fees that are involved.

2. Remove your name from lists.

Register your phone number on the Federal Do Not Call list (1-888-382-1222). In 2003 names on the New York State Do Not Call Registry was absorbed into the Federal Do Not Call list. Every month, telemarketers are required to stop calling people who ask to be part of the registry. Phone numbers remain on the federal no-call list for five years or longer (unless you choose to take your number off or the number is disconnected).

Calls from or on behalf of political organizations, charities and telephone surveyors are still permitted, as are calls from companies you have a business relationship with, or whose calls you've agreed (in writing) to take.

If a third-party telemarketer is calling on behalf of a charity, you can ask not to receive any more calls from, or on behalf of, that specific charity. If a third-party telemarketer calls again on behalf of that charity, the telemarketer may be subject to a fine of up to $11,000.

Even if a call is exempt from this law, you can stop many of these calls just by telling them not to call you again. Federal law requires each and every business to place your name on their no-call list if you request it.

3. Find a system that works for you.

There is no single system that works for everyone, but the best system is the one that works for you. When you find it, take the time to share it with family members.

$ Set up an organized filing system or take time to review and update your files annually.

$ Handle incoming mail once and file, shred, or act on financial documents when they arrive instead of laying them aside.

$ Set up containers (boxes, file folders, large envelopes) for different kinds of paperwork; for example: coupons, bills to pay, correspondence, items to be shredded, bank statements, tax information, and things to file, such as warranties or receipts. Keep these containers in a secure place.

$ Pay bills as they come in or as your paycheck is deposited, rather than saving them up to pay once a month. Set up a bill paying center that's equipped with stamps, envelopes and other supplies.

4. Know where your important documents are located.

$ Review the contents of your safe deposit box, and make a list of everything inside. If you are sole owner, you might want to arrange with your bank to have someone else added or to allow someone access to the box in the event of illness or death.

$ If you find government bonds issued before 1976, cash them in. Savings bonds issued before December 1965 paid interest for 40 years and most bonds issued after that pay interest for 30 years.

$ Keep important documents in a safe place: property and family records (for example, your marriage license), household inventory, insurance policies, financial records such as contracts, bonds/CDs, investments, pension and profit-sharing information.

Source: Mary Fran Lepeska, University of Wisconsin-Extension family living educator in Ozaukee County
Global Positioning Systems (GPS) may take you wherever you want to go, but all too often they are taken - right into the hands of thieves. While the number of thefts has not been quantified, some insurance companies are seeing an increase in claims for these units.

The devices are growing in popularity with a 240 percent increase in unit volume through third quarter 2007 compared with the prior year, noted DuraTrend, the oldest continuously running consumer purchase tracking program in the U.S. Manufacturer-installed navigation units as well as portable units can range in value from $200 to as much as $1,000.

The more popular these systems become, the higher the prevalence of theft. It used to be that stereo systems and air bags were the target of choice for auto thieves, but today, navigation systems are becoming more popular because they are easy to remove and thieves can make a quick buck by selling them on the Internet.

Both portable and factory-installed units are often covered under the comprehensive portion of a standard auto insurance policy, minus the deductible; check with your insurer to be sure.

What You Can Do

To prevent thefts, the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) recommends “layered protection.” The more layers of protection on your vehicle, the more difficult it is to steal your vehicle or your GPS system. These layers include:

1. Securing your vehicle even if parking for brief periods. Remove your keys from the ignition and lock your doors/close windows.
2. Parking in a well-lit area.
3. Installing a alarm system.
4. Removing portable navigation systems from the car, including windshield mounts.
5. Registering your unit with the manufacturer so that you have the serial number in the event the unit is stolen.

A lot of owners leave the windshield mounts of these portable devices behind when they detach the units. This is a dead giveaway as thieves look on the windshield for the circle on the glass. That leads vandals to think the GPS is somewhere in the car. Not only is there the loss of the unit, but often there is damage done to the vehicle when thieves attempt to break in.

Source: Insurance Information Institute (I.I.I), www.iii.org

SUMMER OFFICE HOURS

Summer hours for Cornell Cooperative Extension of Herkimer County:

May 27th through September 2nd, 2008
8:00 am - 4:00 pm
Monday through Friday
CDC STUDY REVEALS ADULTS MAY NOT GET ENOUGH REST OR SLEEP

About 10 percent of adults report not getting enough rest or sleep every day in the past month, according to a new four-state study released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR).

The data from the four states - Delaware, Hawaii, New York, and Rhode Island - may not reflect national trends. But an additional study conducted by CDC utilizing data from the National Health Interview Study indicated that across all age groups the percentage of adults who, on average, report sleeping six hours or less has increased from 1985 to 2006.

Nationwide, an estimated 50 to 70 million people suffer from chronic sleep loss and sleep disorders. Sleep loss is associated with health problems, including obesity, depression, and certain risk behaviors, including cigarette smoking, physical inactivity, and heavy drinking.

It’s important to better understand how sleep impacts people’s overall health and the need to take steps to improve the sufficiency of their sleep. There are very few studies to assess and address sleep insufficiencies; therefore, more needs to be done to better understand the problem and to develop effective sleep interventions.

The study, “Perceived Insufficient Rest or Sleep - Four States, 2006,” analyzed data from CDC’s Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey. Among the four states, the percentage of adults who reported not getting enough rest or sleep every day in the past 30 days ranged from 14 percent in Delaware to 8 percent in Hawaii.

People concerned about chronic sleep loss should consult a physician for an assessment and possible treatment, such as behavioral or medical interventions. They can also try setting a regular sleep schedule and avoiding caffeine or other stimulants before bed.

Variation for insufficient rest and sleep may be due to occupational or lifestyle factors. The causes of sleep loss could include busy schedules or shift work; irregular sleep schedules; or lifestyle factors such as heavy family demands, late-night television watching and Internet use, or the use of caffeine and alcohol, according to a 2006 Institute of Medicine report. The National Sleep Foundation reports that most adults need 7-9 hours of sleep each night to feel fully rested while school children aged 5-12 years require 9-11 hours, and adolescents aged 11-17 years require 8.5-9.5 hours each night.

The study also found that the prevalence of insufficient sleep decreased with age. An estimated 13.3 percent of adults aged 18-34 reported insufficient rest or sleep everyday in the past month compared to only 7.3 percent of adults ages 55 and older. While some studies have found sleep disturbance more prevalent among older adults, results from this study are consistent with other research that supports the idea that older adults (who are more likely to be retired) make fewer complaints regarding impaired sleep and adapt their perception of what encompasses sufficient sleep.

In addition, the study showed that only one out of three (29.6 percent) adults said they did get enough rest or sleep every day in the past month.

The MMWR report said the definitions of “enough” (sufficient) sleep and “rest,” and responses to the survey question were subjective and were not measured or equated to reports of hours of sleep per night. The report said the analysis cannot be compared directly with studies measuring hours of sleep. The survey question also did not define or distinguish between “rest” and “sleep.”

For more information, please visit www.sleepfoundation.org or CDC’s Sleep and Sleep Disorders Program at www.cdc.gov/sleep.

Source: Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Health and Human Services 2/28/08 press release
TIPS ON MOTORCYCLE INSURANCE

With motorcycles growing in popularity, some auto insurers are now offering motorcycle insurance, either as a separate policy or as an endorsement to a personal automobile policy.

Motorcycles are appealing to a new group of enthusiasts, consisting largely of older and more affluent riders, surveys have found. Indeed, sales of all types of two-wheelers reached about 1.16 million vehicles in 2006, Insurance Information Institute research indicates.

Motorcycles are by their nature more vulnerable to the hazards of weather and road conditions than closed vehicles. They are also less visible to other drivers and pedestrians and less stable than four-wheel vehicles. Operating a motorcycle requires a different combination of physical and mental skills than those used in driving four-wheel vehicles.

Those in the market for motorcycle insurance will find that most states require you to carry a minimum amount of liability coverage. Liability insurance covers bodily injury and property damage that you may cause to other people involved in an accident. It doesn't cover you or your motorcycle. You need to buy first-party medical coverage if you want to be reimbursed for bodily injury expenses you incurred while on your motorcycle. Depending upon the policy, a motorcyclist can purchase coverage for first-party medical bills he or she receives, ranging from $2,000 to $25,000. Moreover, find out if your liability coverage also includes Guest Passenger Liability, which provides financial protection in the event that your passenger is injured while on your motorcycle.

Other coverage available to motorcycle owners are usually optional, such as collision (covering damage to your motorcycle), comprehensive (covering damage caused by events other than a collision, such as fire, theft or vandalism) and uninsured/underinsured motorist coverage (damages to you and your property caused by another driver who either doesn't have insurance [uninsured] or doesn't have adequate insurance [underinsured] to cover your damages). Always ask your insurance agent or company representative which insurance coverage is required in your state.

Many factors play a role in determining what a motorcycle owner's insurance costs will be, such as the individual's age, driving record, where he or she lives and the type of motorcycle the policyholder owns. Some additional criteria weighing on the eventual cost of a motorcycle insurance policy are:

- The model, style (sports bike vs. cruiser) and age of the motorcycle, as well as the number of miles you drive it in any given year - and where you store your bike - affect how much you will pay in motorcycle insurance premiums.
- Find out what discounts your insurance representative offers. Multi-bike discounts for those insuring more than one bike, motorcycle association discounts and mature rider discounts for experienced riders offer additional cost-saving possibilities. Discounts can range anywhere from 10 percent to 20 percent, depending on the company and your state.
- Many companies offer discounts on motorcycle insurance for graduates of training courses, such as the Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) rider course. Riders under the age of 25, usually considered at higher risk, and motorcyclists who have already had accidents stand to save the most if they complete this type of course.
- The installation or presence of antitheft devices can result in additional motorcycle insurance premium savings, too.
- In many northern states, seasonal motorcyclists may save money by buying a "lay-up" policy. With a lay-up policy, all coverage except comprehensive is suspended during winter months.
- Be sure to ask your insurance agent about motorcycle accessories coverage for items such as add-ons, customizations, aftermarket parts and any other additions that a motorcycle’s owner has affixed to their bike since its purchase.

Many motorcycle owners also own all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and choose not to insure their ATVs because most are not used on public roadways. Nonetheless, ATVs pose many inherent dangers and risks. All-terrain vehicle policies are very similar to those involving motorcycles but cost substantially less. In fact, the average annual ATV policy is priced in the $200 range, a small price to pay for peace of mind.

Source: Insurance Information Institute 2/21/08 press release
HIT-AND-RUN ACCIDENTS CAN HIT INSURED DRIVERS BY SURPRISE

Even though the total number of non-fatal crashes declined steadily from 6.3 million to 5.9 million from 2003 to 2006, the ratio of hit-and-run accidents remained unchanged, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). During that four-year period, one of every 8 accidents nationwide was a hit-and-run.

But there were significant regional variations. For example, with more than one million hit-and-run crashes, the South had nearly three times as many hit-and-run incidents as the Northeast (366,000) and nearly twice as many as the West (650,000), despite California having one of the highest rates of hit-and-run accidents in the nation. The Midwest ranked second nationwide with more than 835,000 reported hit-and-run incidents.

Many drivers are unprepared for the consequences of becoming the victim of a hit-and-run crash when the other driver cannot be identified. Instead of the at-fault driver's auto insurance policy covering the victim's costs for medical expenses, vehicle repairs and a replacement rental car, it ends up being the victim's responsibility to pay the deductible, as well as all other expenses.

According to the Insurance Information Institute, a non-profit consumer education organization, consumers can protect themselves from the financial consequences of a hit-and-run accident. For example, not being able to identify the other driver is the same as being involved in an accident with an uninsured driver. But, uninsured motorist coverage, which pays for injury and damages caused by an uninsured or hit-and-run driver, is not obligatory in every state. Therefore, some insured drivers are not covered. Uninsured motorist coverage can easily be added to an auto insurance policy.

In addition, some auto insurance companies do not automatically cover the cost of a temporary replacement rental car while a car is being repaired, even if it was caused by a hit-and-run driver. Most cars are in a repair shop for two weeks after an accident. Considering that the average daily rate for a rental car is $50, it can end up costing more for a one-day rental car than for one full-year of replacement rental car coverage, which is only a couple of dollars a month.

According to the data from the NHTSA, 80 percent of hit-and-run accidents cause vehicle damage only. Therefore, the victim's largest expenses usually are for repairs and a replacement rental car.

To help insured drivers become better prepared for any type of motor vehicle accident, a web site at http://www.wiserdrivers.com has been developed with information from the Insurance Information Institute and Council of Better Business Bureaus, both non-profit organizations. In addition to tips, the Web site encourages drivers to review their auto insurance policy annually to make sure they have adequate coverage for various types of crashes – those that are their fault, those that are not their fault, and hit-and-run.

Many of us think that we’re well prepared to deal with an accident, but people often don’t take the time to read and understand their policy. Most policies are very specific and provide detailed explanations about what is automatically included and what additional low cost options are available.

The Council of Better Business Bureaus agrees. Comparison shopping for price is important, but even more importantly, consumers need to ensure they have appropriate coverage because a few dollars saved in the short run can cost consumers a fortune in the end.

Sources: Insurance Information Institute, March 2008 press release
PROTECT YOUR HOME FROM MOLD DANGERS

Homes affected by flooding may be harboring mold. Mold can be a significant problem after flooding and proper cleanup is critical to ensure that it does not affect you or your family's health.

People sensitive to mold may experience a stuffy nose, irritated eyes, skin irritation, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath. People with asthma, pregnant women, infants, the elderly and individuals with compromised immune systems are at higher risk for health problems from mold. If you or your family members have health problems after exposure to mold, contact your doctor or other health care provider.

To prevent or stop the growth of mold after a flood, all areas of a home that got wet in the floodwaters must be cleaned and completely dried. Mold can start to grow within 48 hours. Discard all moldy carpeting and any porous materials such as books, clothing, bedding or furniture that already smells of mold or is visibly growing mold. Remember, when in doubt, throw it out.

Once a house has a mold problem, all areas of the home must be checked, cleaned and dried including air ducts and basement crawl spaces. To prevent further mold growth, seal all leaks in roofs, walls or pipes that bring excess moisture into the house. Discard all moldy drywall, ceiling tiles and wet insulation. Keep receipts from the cleaning process since disaster assistance may be available to help with cleaning costs.

To clean away mold already growing on hard surfaces, use commercial products, soap and water, or a bleach solution of no more than 1 ½ cups of bleach in one gallon of water. Use a stiff brush on rough surface materials such as concrete. Always open windows and doors while working with bleach to provide fresh air and wear non-porous gloves and protective eyewear during the cleaning process.

Never mix bleach with ammonia or other household cleaners. Mixing bleach with other cleaning products will produce dangerous, toxic fumes so always follow the manufacturer's instructions when using cleaning products.

Damage to a home from flooding may be so extensive that it may seem easier to hire a contractor or cleaning service to help with flood damage cleanup. When hiring a contractor, use extra care in the hiring process and make sure they have experience cleaning up mold.

Whenever possible, deal with trained and experienced professionals in your own community. These are business people with a local reputation to protect and can be held accountable for their work. Avoid offers that seem to good to be true.

For more information on mold and mold cleanup: The Environmental Protection Agency provides a comprehensive description on the dangers of mold and how to clean and disinfect a mold-damaged home on its web page. Mold resources are available at www.epa.gov/mold/moldresources.html.

Source: Federal Emergency Management Agency, 3/19/08 press release
IT’S NEVER TOO LATE TO GET UP AND GO

Modern life has its comforts and conveniences, but they come with a price: it’s never been easier to do nothing for hours at a time. And as the time we spend sitting in the car, at our desk, and in front of the TV piles up, our bodies adjust by piling on the pounds and inches.

But it doesn’t have to happen, according to the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR). And even after it does, we can reverse the process. It’s now clear that at any stage of life, you have the ability to get back on your feet and reap the health benefits that come with getting more active.

Here are the stakes: AICR expert panel members found evidence that sedentary living convincingly increases risk of weight gain. And the researchers went even further, noting that one particular American pastime – watching TV – has its own probable role in making us fatter.

Why is that important? Because the research also shows that once a person becomes overweight, they open the door to several kinds of cancer and other chronic diseases.

If you’re not as active as you used to be, there are adjustments you can make to improve your health, strength and energy level. We’re not talking marathons here. Any type of physical activity, at any age, gets extra oxygen pumping through the bloodstream and helps to regulate blood sugar.

Research keeps revealing new benefits. Not only can exercise help you lose weight, gain strength and improve circulation, it can also help fight mild depression, improve cholesterol levels and immunity, lower your blood pressure and make the heart and brain more efficient. And a fascinating recent study suggests that regular exercise might even slow the aging process of the DNA inside our cells.

According to a 2006 study at Duke University, overweight, middle-aged adults who have been sedentary for six months can overcome the negative health effects of inactivity with six months of exercise. The main points to remember when getting “back into the game” are:

- **Make a firm decision to start.** Pick a start date and stick to it. Consciously adjust your schedule to accommodate the extra minutes you’ll be spending off the couch.
- **Be consistent.** Don’t knock yourself out in the beginning. Start slowly, but steadily – you’re trying to get your mind and your body into a habit. If you miss a day, don’t fret -- an “all or nothing” approach can be self-defeating. Just pick it up the next day.
- **Be patient with your body.** It’ll take time to undo all those hours you’ve spent on the couch. If you set realistic expectations, you’ll get there before you know it.
- **And why go at it alone?** Enjoy the company of friends and family, adults and children while you start a new exercise program.

Remember: obesity rates have tripled in the United States in the last three decades, even in children. Why not encourage your kids and grandkids to visit the pool with you, join you in a nature walk, or even just a game of catch?

Source: American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR), eNewsletter, February 2008
The words caffeine and energy seem to go hand-in-hand. If you count on that kick from your caffeine-loaded beverage to jump start your day or help with brain fog, you can find it just as easily in food.

This new trend of adding caffeine to food likely started in part because the candy industry is suffering from fewer kids in the population and the increasing awareness of the obesity epidemic in our country. Candy manufacturers have taken to creative marketing and are now targeting adults - their new audience - by loading up their confections with energy enhancing additives, including caffeine.

In addition to these newly-charged choices, caffeine still occurs naturally in foods such as coffee beans, cocoa beans, tea leaves and kola nuts.

If it's now easier to get caffeine in your diet, is it better to be adding more of it? That depends on your perspective. Caffeine can have both positive and negative health effects. Caffeine:

* Enhances athletic performance when an endurance activity such as running, biking or swimming exceeds one hour
* Increases cognitive ability and alertness
* Contributes to anxiety, nervousness and insomnia
* Increases incidence of upset stomach
* Diminishes tension headaches

There are often other mixed messages or myths around caffeine's effects on health, and it is easy to be confused about its impact. Here are some good facts that apply to the person who consumes caffeine in moderation:

* Though caffeine raises blood pressure, it does not seem to have that effect on habitual caffeine consumers.
* Neither cholesterol nor heart disease is affected.
* Women who are pregnant should limit caffeine because it has been linked to miscarriage.
* Frequently caffeine is identified as a culprit in dehydration, but caffeine-containing beverages can count toward a day's total fluid intake. While caffeine is a mild diuretic it has not been shown to contribute to dehydration. Also, if you're a habitual caffeine consumer, your body adjusts and is able to hold the water from caffeinated drinks.

Though it must appear on the ingredient list, manufacturers are not required to list the amount of caffeine. Some candy companies have included “not recommended for children, pregnant women or people sensitive to caffeine” on the label. Many caffeine-enhanced products on your grocers' shelves are marketed to adults, but they are readily available to kids and teens.

All of the current research indicates that healthy people can moderately consume caffeine. However, people who want to cut back or eliminate it should do so gradually to avoid some of the mild side effects that though temporary may also be uncomfortable. Some people are more caffeine sensitive than others and their side effects of reducing caffeine may include headaches or irritability.

The good news is that you can continue to enjoy your caffeine and remain guilt-free. However, take into account that with caffeine readily available in food there is another reason to check labels. That old adage, “you are what you eat” definitely applies. Aim for moderation and try to limit your intake to about 300 milligrams a day.

If you want to check how much caffeine you generally consume, visit the website for the Center for Science in the Public Interest and click on their chart for caffeine content of a list of foods: http://www.cspinet.org/new/cafchart.htm.

Source: Colorado State University Extension, March 20, 2008
Everyone's feeling the shock of higher grocery prices these days: you run in to buy a few basics, and $60 later you leave the store wondering where your money went. In fact, grocery bills have risen about 5.7 percent in the past two years. The reasons are complex, but for the most part, economists blame water shortages; increased production of biofuels such as ethanol, which is made from corn; and higher oil prices.

Here are some tips to help you cut your food bill:

$ Make a list before you shop. Impulse purchases can eat up a sizable amount of your grocery budget if you're not careful. So make a list, scan the weekly circulars and find sales.

$ Snipping coupons may seem more hassle than it's worth, but statistics reveal it's a supersmart saving's strategy. According to the Promotion Marketing Association's Coupon Council, 20 minutes of coupon clipping can shave 20 percent off your weekly grocery bill - which can add up to $1,000 or more in savings each year. To maximize savings, don't stop with the finds in your newspaper; some stores hand you coupons along with your register receipt, and if you've got a computer, log on to www.thegrocerygame.com and www.coupons.net for even more savings.

$ Staples, such as produce, meat, bread, and milk - items that make up the bulk of your budget - are stocked along the outer perimeter of the market. You'll cut spending on pricey prepackaged foods by cruising the edge of the store first and then tackling the aisles for the remaining items on your list.

$ Grocery stores generally place higher-priced items where they're easiest to see and grab, so you'll usually find lower-priced versions on shelves above and below eye level.

$ Don't assume that bigger boxes offer the better savings. Check the unit price listed on the shelf tab and compare to find out if the larger box of cereal is a smarter buy than the smaller one. If the cereal is going to go stale before you get a chance to eat all of it, go for the smaller box anyway.

$ Store cards can give you instant access to sales, so sign up even at markets you don't usually frequent. And if you don't know if a store doubles coupons, honors competitors' sales, or offers rain checks, ask - you could be missing out on a slew of money-saving opportunities.

$ Precut and premixed produce can cost more than double the usual price, so you'll save a bundle by peeling, cutting, and mixing at home. And peruse the produce on clearance. While most selections may be past their prime, you can hit on some happy surprises, especially if your menu's flexible - for example, those slightly soft tomatoes might be perfect for the pasta sauce you'd planned to make later in the week, as long as you're willing to cook them tonight.

$ Stockpiling items when they go on sale can multiply your savings by however many you buy - but those dozen boxes of 25-cent pasta are only a bargain if you can eat them all before the bugs set in. So check your pantry to get a sense of how much of something you have on hand, and clean out your fridge and cupboards to make room for bargains before you buy.

$ It's human nature to buy more food when you're hungry, and supermarkets can use some sneaky strategies - like parking mouthwatering items just inside the entrance or at the checkout line. To avoid blowing your budget (and your diet) on food you just don't need, shop just after breakfast or dinner. And if you can't sync your shopping with mealtime, at least have a filling snack before you head into the store.

Source: AARP Magazine, January/February 2008
While summer seems far away, parents are already considering where to send their child for summer camp. Before camp begins, there are some preparations to consider that may make the child’s camp experience more fun and rewarding. Summer camp is more than a vacation for. At camp, kids learn to appreciate the outdoors, develop companionship and pick up skills that enhance self-reliance, cooperation and interdependence. These skills will remain with them into adulthood.

- **Consider camp as a learning experience.** This is an opportunity for your child to explore a world bigger than their neighborhood and a chance for you and your child to practice "letting go." Letting go allows children to develop autonomy and a stronger sense of self, make new friends, develop new social skills, learn about teamwork, be creative, and more. This time also allows parents an opportunity to take care of themselves so that they will feel refreshed when their child returns home.

- **Prepare for camp together.** Decisions about camp - like where to go and what to pack - should be a joint venture, keeping in mind your child's maturity. If your child feels a part of the decision-making process, their chances of having a positive experience will improve.

- **Talk about concerns.** As the first day of camp nears, some children experience uneasiness about going away. Encourage your child to talk about these feelings rather than acting on what you think their feelings may be. Communicate confidence in your child's ability to handle being away from home.

- **Encourage children to have a reasonable and realistic view of camp.** Discuss both the ups and downs the child may encounter. Make sure the child does not feel pressured to succeed at camp. For the child, the main purpose of camp is to relax and have fun. Once the child arrives at camp, they may experience the fear of failure in new situations. Some refer to this as "homesickness," which can take the form of stomachaches, headaches, occasional misbehavior (in hopes of being sent home) or even statements about "hating" camp.

Most kids need a couple of days to adjust to life at camp and being away from home. They miss familiar surroundings, parents, pets and friends. Overcoming homesickness, upsets in the cabin and learning to care for oneself are important challenges that can be faced at camp.

Source: American Camping Association, as printed in Caring for Kids, June 2007
GROW A FAMILY GARDEN

Gardening offers family fun. In a garden, you can be active, relax, and spend time together. Growing vegetables or herbs teaches children that plants, like people, need food and water to grow and stay healthy. Caring for plants helps develop responsibility. It also builds self-esteem when kids see what they can grow.

A garden can teach your child about new foods. Kids usually taste what they grow.

What You Need:

- Containers for city gardens: milk and juice carton, empty cans, empty bleach bottle, dishpan, plastic bucket, fish bowl, and bushel basket
- Garden plot: a two-foot plot is big enough. Hint: Preparing soil is hard for young children.
- Child-size tools: watering can, hose, small shovel, old spoon and fork, small rake, digging stick, hoe and spade, sticks to label plants
- Seeds or seedlings (young plants)
- Water for your hose or watering can
- Soil for container gardens
- Fertilizer: compost, manure, chemical types

Easy Foods for Kids to Grow:

- Beets, carrots, cherry tomatoes, collard greens, cucumbers, green beans, herbs, lettuce, okra, onion, peppers, spinach, tomatoes, zucchini.
- In window sill pot: herbs, seeds to transplant as young plants in the garden.

“I Can Grow Things!”

Most kids are proud of what they grow. Even when gardening is messy, your child is learning. They can help with almost any gardening task. It’s okay if the garden isn’t planted perfectly.

Here’s What You Need to Do:

- Choose the vegetables or herbs we will grow.
- Find a sunny place.
- Prepare the soil in a container or in the garden.
- Plant seeds or small plants in the soil.
- Water plants when they are thirsty.
- Measure plants as they grow and vegetables form. Talk about it.
- Pull the weeds.
- Pick vegetables or herbs when they are ready.
- Wash the food.
- Eat and enjoy it!

For more ideas on gardening with kids, check out these websites:

http://www.kidsgardening.org

and a website at Cornell University that works with "garden-based learning":

http://www.hort.cornell.edu/gbl

Source: Nibbles for Health 34 – Nutrition Newsletters for Parents of Young Children, USDA, Food and Nutrition Service, as seen in Education for Living, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Seneca County
We're on the Web!
www.cce.cornell.edu/herkimer

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