



EHHD

Eastern Highlands Health District

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Date: September 1st 2015

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Eastern Highlands Health District Celebrates Childhood Obesity Awareness Month by Giving Residents Some Creative and Tasty Ways to Eat More Produce and Stay Active!

One in three American children are obese. Obesity puts kids at risk for health problems including type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease. The good news is that childhood obesity can be prevented. In honor of National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month the Eastern Highlands Health District (EHHD) is encouraging families to make healthy changes together. Focusing on eating enough fruits and vegetables is a great place to start, and is fun too!

Did you ever think that eating fruits and vegetables could be just as important as taking a medication that your doctor prescribed to you? Did you know that watermelon is about 92% water and can help keep you hydrated? Prioritizing fruits and vegetables just as highly as your doctor's medical recommendations for you and your family is a great way to ensure you and your family eat enough fruits and vegetables and maintain a healthy body weight.

Most people know that eating enough fruits and vegetables is good for them but people of all ages aren't getting enough. There are many frequently asked questions about the USDA's recommendation to eat 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day. A significant fact to note is that the FDA has confirmed that when frozen, vegetables and fruits lose a negligible amount of nutrients so they are a great and inexpensive way to increase your produce intake. When it comes to maximizing your vitamin and mineral intake, important things to put into practice include trying to always eat produce in its ripest form, only consuming canned fruit in water or its own juice (avoid syrups or sauces), rinsing canned vegetables to reduce sodium levels, washing your produce to remove harmful pesticides and to reduce your risk of food borne illness, and eating the whole fruit or vegetable, including the skin which contains many nutrients (don't be afraid to eat the skin of an apple or use fresh orange zest on a salad!).

Many people have questions about what fruits and vegetables can count towards their 5 servings per day. Here are some facts about "grey area" produce:

- 1 tbs. of unsweetened dried fruit (i.e. raisins or dates) can be counted towards one serving of fruit per day (it's recommended that only one of your daily servings of fruit be dried).
- 3 heaping tbs. of fresh/frozen/canned peas, corn or carrots can count towards one serving of vegetables per day.



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- White potatoes don't count towards a serving of vegetables (they are considered a starch).
- 100% unsweetened fruit or vegetable juice can count for 1 serving of fruit or vegetable per day.
- 3 tbs. of beans (chick peas, black, kidney, etc.) count as 1 serving of vegetables.

Director of EHHD Robert Miller comments that “when it comes to increasing one’s intake of fruits and vegetables keeping it simple is important. Research shows that one of the best things a person can do to reduce their risk for chronic disease is to consume a wide variety of fruits and vegetables at each meal.” Robert Miller’s comment is supported by fruit and vegetable studies done at Harvard University which conclude that there is no one “magic” fruit or vegetable that prevents disease or keeps you healthy. The truth is that it’s the amount of fruits and vegetables (aim to fill half your plate with fruits or vegetables at each meal) and the variety of types and colors of produce one consumes that provides your body with the mix of nutrients it needs to stay healthy.

A few tips that will help you and your family maintain a healthy body weight include:

- Keep a bowl of fruit handy where the whole family can see it.
- Challenge your family to try a new veggie or fruit every week.
- Sneak some cauliflower into mac and cheese, veggies on a pizza or spinach into a smoothie (spinach is a sweeter green so you won't taste spinach!).
- Chop small pieces of fresh vegetables into a gallon freezer bag. Use this veggie bag for salads, omelets, as a healthy snack with hummus or nut butter or throw into a stir fry dinner.
- Get active outside! Take walks in your neighborhood, play some ball or go for a hike.
- Limit screen time (computer, TV, video games) for the entire family to 2 hours or less per day.

While increasing your intake of fruits and vegetables can seem stressful and expensive try to have fun and enjoy process. Instead of trying to double or triple your produce intake overnight go at a slower pace and increase it by one serving a week. Try a new fruit or vegetable each week, focus on a new color each week or rotate which family member is in charge of fruit and vegetable selection. Save money on your produce by looking at grocery store flyers to see what's on sale, buying what's in season and having a plan on how to use your produce so that nothing gets wasted.

Remember, eating more fruits and veggies and can be fun and tasty – and it's worth it!

For more information on improving you and your family's fruit and vegetable intake and resources such as how many fruits and vegetables to consume for each age group, creative and simple recipes and frequently asked questions please visit EHHD's website at <http://www.ehhd.org/morematters->.

Sources for this press release include <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/vegetables-and-fruits/>, www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org, and www.cdc.gov/nutrition.