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For more information,
contact: Holly Miner
Nutrition, Food Safety and Health Agent, Wildcat Extension District
Independence, KS 67301
haminer@ksu.edu

Small Changes Add Up

When making changes to your eating habits, it is best to keep things simple. Eating healthy is important at every stage of life and can have positive effects that will last a lifetime. It's important to eat a variety of fruits vegetables, grains, protein foods, and dairy foods. When deciding what to eat or drink, choose options that are full of nutrients. Make every bite count. An easy way to do this is to follow the MyPlate Guidelines.

A healthy plate includes foods from all of the food groups: fruits, vegetables, grains, protein and dairy. Some things to consider when preparing meals include:

- Half of your plate should be fruits and vegetables. As you focus on fruits select whole fruits. Include fruit at breakfast! Top whole-grain cereal with your favorite fruit, add berries to pancakes, or mix dried fruit into hot oatmeal.
- Vary your veggies by cooking a variety of colorful veggies. Make extra vegetables and save some for later. Use them for stew, soup, or a pasta dish.
- Vary your proteins. Try adding a new protein like shrimp, beans, chicken, or beef to tacos for a change. Additional sources of protein include nuts, beans and rice as well as dairy products.
- Make half your grains whole grains by adding brown rice to your stir-fry dishes. Combine your favorite veggies and protein foods for a nutritious meal.
- Move to low-fat or fat-free milk or yogurt. Enjoy a low-fat yogurt parfait for breakfast. Top with fruit and nuts to get in two more food groups. Cheese is a great snack or quick pick me up.
- Drink and eat less sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars. These foods may taste good but add little to no nutritional value to our diets. Replacing a sugary beverage with milk, 100% fruit juice or water will provide your body with nutrients and lower your overall calorie intake.
- Cook at home and read the ingredients to compare foods. Label reading will help you identify foods that have added sugars, sodium and fats as well as nutrients our body needs.

A healthy diet starts with an 8-inch plate. A smaller plate helps portion sizes stay closer to recommended amounts for a healthy diet. Using common objects to help identify portion sizes is an easy way to think about how much you are consuming during a meal or snack.

Simple portion ideas include:

1 teaspoon butter	1 postage stamp ¼ inch thick
2 Tablespoons peanut butter	½ golf ball
1.5-ounces of cheese	3 dice
2-3 oz. of protein	1 deck of cards
A medium potato	1 computer mouse
A pancake	1 CD disc
¼ cup dried fruit	1 golf ball
Medium fruit	1 tennis ball
1 cup of salad greens	1 baseball
1 cup of fruits, vegetables, rice or pasta	1 baseball

The book “Small Steps to Health and Wealth” states that research indicates using portion size measurement aids, like those in the above chart, helps to significantly improve estimations of portion sizes.

In the 1980’s, a typical serving of French fries was 2.4 oz. and 210 calories compared to today’s super-size serving of 6.9 oz. and 610 calories. We’re enticed to super-size because it seems like a bargain – like you’re getting more for your money.

Retailers also entice us to spend more with promotions such as “buy 2 get 1 free.” Obvious consumption and impulse eating can lead to excessive calorie consumption. Excess calories could lead to a 10-pound weight gain if not expended through daily physical activities.

Think about portion sizes when preparing meals, eating out or having a snack and select foods that fall under the MyPlate Guidelines. These small steps will lead to healthy habits that will last a lifetime.

For more information about nutrition, food safety or health contact Holly Miner at haminer@ksu.edu or call 620-331-2690 or 308-224-4628 or stop by any Wildcat District office.

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