

Family & Consumer Focus

Summer 2008

How Much Food and Exercise Do We Really Need?

Shirley Camp, Extension educator, nutrition and wellness

How much food do we need each day? How much exercise is enough? On both counts, the answer is...it depends.

Food needs are based on an individual's size, gender, and level of physical activity. We all need a variety of nutrients every day, but the amount of food needed will vary from person to person. The amount of exercise we need also varies.



If you go to the website www.MyPyramid.gov, you will find information about how much food and exercise an individual needs each day. Adults who are at their recommended weight may need 30 minutes of physical activity each day. But, for weight loss, up to 90 minutes may be recommended. Children and teens need 60 minutes of physical activity per day.

Individuals who are more active need more food than those who are less active. How much food and what kind of food you eat will depend on your individual needs. At the MyPyramid website, you can type in your name, age, gender, height, weight, and physical activity level to find out how much of each food group you should consume every day.

Individuals who are physically active may need to drink more fluids to replace what they lose in sweat. University of Illinois nutritionists recommend drinking cool water before, during, and after exercise.

If you have a teen athlete in your family, visit the U of I Extension Sports and Nutrition website, www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/hsnut for practical advice on eating for better sports performance.

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Good Reasons to Eat Leafy Greens

Carol Schlitt, Extension educator, nutrition and wellness

We all know leafy greens are good for us...but just what the heck *are* they?

Leafy greens are those green, leafy vegetables that require cooking to tame their otherwise bitter taste.

They offer health benefits ranging from mental sharpness to weight management. Like their cruciferous cousins (broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts), leafy greens also contain antioxidants that help the body naturally detoxify, placing them high on the list of foods that may help reduce the chance of developing cancer.

Try adding some of these leafy greens to your diet.

Kale: This is one of the healthiest greens for your bones. Just 1 cup of cooked kale contains nearly 1,300 percent of your daily requirement of vitamin K, a nutrient that helps to support healthy bone formation. Kale also contains manganese, which promotes bone density, and is high in calcium. Best of all, kale is the top leafy green source of carotenoids, which promote eye health and may help lower the risk of age-related macular degeneration.

Swiss Chard: These leafy greens may help you lower your blood

pressure because 1 cup cooked supplies nearly one-third of your daily potassium requirement. A mineral marvel, Swiss chard is the top leafy green source of iron and an excellent source of vitamin C.

Mustard and Turnip Greens: While these two don't pack quite the nutrient punch as kale and Swiss chard, they still contain large amounts of the bone-healthy vitamins K, C, and folate. They're also a good plant source of vitamin E, a potent antioxidant that may help boost the body's natural immunity. Compared to kale, turnip greens are even higher in calcium, making it a top plant source of this mineral.

Summer Learning is Just a Click Away

Milly Kaiser, Extension educator, family life

School may be out, but parents can continue to engage their kids in learning opportunities this summer. Whether you have a computer at home or use a computer at the library, fun education is just a click away.

Parents can use the internet to help their children explore the world and understand how things work. Here are just a few websites that include fun hands-on activities:

National Geographic Kids, <http://kids.nationalgeographic.com>

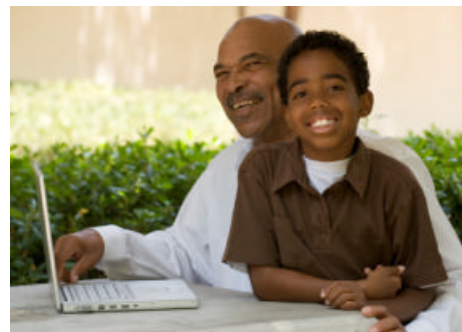
The Exploratorium, www.exploratorium.edu

Book Adventure, www.bookadventure.com

The Yuckiest Site on the Internet, <http://yucky.discover.com/flash/>

Just for Kids, www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/kids

Families can use educational websites to learn something new each week. Your new knowledge may trigger other opportunities to explore and experience together.



Of course, parents need to monitor their children's computer use to make sure they are using the technology safely.

A family that learns together grows together. Make fun learning a summer tradition. Your children will sense your value for education and family time.

Keeping Your Carpets Clean

Lois Smith, Extension educator, consumer and family economics

Light carpet, especially white shades, can be a challenge to keep clean. Even if everyone in the home takes off their shoes at the door, the carpet will eventually show signs of soil and wear.

Light colored carpet is pretty when it is new but, eventually, all sorts of “things” begin to appear. Everything that is tracked in or settles out of the air is collected by carpeting. A “shoes off” policy and using entry mats at doorways helps keep carpets clean longer, but high traffic areas will still be the first to show signs of wear.

The beauty and life of your carpet depends on the care and maintenance it receives. But before you rush out to rent a carpet cleaning machine, there are several factors to consider.

Before using a carpet cleaning machine, read the warranty provided by the manufacturer of the carpet. To remain valid, the warranty may require that the carpet be cleaned by professionals. Even if the warranty is not an issue, cleaning carpets with a rental unit can sometimes create more problems.

It is easy to over-saturate carpet with water, leaving the carpet susceptible to mildew growth on the backside and in the padding. It can also be difficult to get all the shampoo out of the carpeting, and the remaining residue holds dirt. This makes the carpet look even worse. If the machines themselves are not cared for properly, the brushes may be dirty or worn; this situation can also damage your carpet. Even if you purchase your own machine, some of these problems can still occur.

Considering all the problems associated with do-it-yourself carpet cleaning, the best option may be to have a reputable company come in and do the cleaning.

It is important to hire the right professional cleaners with the right equipment, training, and experience. Professionals will be able to remove the dirt, stains, and spills from the carpet, restore its color and beauty, and improve the overall indoor environmental quality in the room.

Ask questions before hiring a cleaning company. Find out how long they've been in business, the type of training their staff receives, whether they vacuum before they clean, and what type of cleaning solutions and equipment they use. Ask about their guarantee and check with the Better Business Bureau to make sure they have no complaints against them.

Finally, be sure you get a contract and read it carefully before you sign it.



Easy Summer Meal

Small appliances are ideal for summer cooking. Slow cookers, electric skillets, and microwaves are good alternatives to oven cooking—so you can keep the kitchen cooler.

For a quick dinner that's big on taste and light on calories, try this pork and sweet potato recipe.

Pork-Sweet Potato Skillet

Makes 4 Servings

4 thin-cut pork chops (about 1 pound)
 1 cup apple juice
 1 medium onion, cut in 1/4-inch slices
 1 tablespoon flour
 1/8 teaspoon ground allspice
 Salt to taste (optional)
 17-ounce can sweet potatoes, vacuum-packed

1. Brown chops in hot skillet.
2. Add 3/4 cup of the apple juice. Top with onion slices. Cover, reduce heat, and cook 5 minutes.
3. Mix flour and seasonings. Stir into remaining 1/4 cup apple juice. Stir into liquid in pan.
4. Arrange sweet potatoes around and over chops.
5. Spoon sauce over potatoes. Cover and cook about 10 minutes longer, until potatoes are hot and chops are done. Pork chops are done when the temperature reaches 160°F with a food thermometer.

Per Serving: 293 calories, 25 grams protein, 37 grams carbohydrates, 5 grams fat, 65 milligrams cholesterol, 50 milligrams calcium, 176 milligrams sodium, 2 milligrams iron.

Tips for Buying a Home Computer

Annette Campbell, Extension educator, communications and marketing

The back-to-school season of August-September is one of the best times to get a good deal on a new computer. But more important than getting a good price is buying what best suits your needs.

Rather than basing your decision purely on price, ask yourself these important questions:

How will the computer be used?

If the computer will mainly be used for word processing (typing) and surfing the internet, you may not need a top-of-the-line unit. That being said, you probably want a computer that will meet your needs for several years. If it will be used for playing games or editing video, you will need plenty of memory along with high-quality video and sound cards.

Do I need a desktop or laptop?

If portability is important, a laptop is ideal. With a laptop, you can move from room to room in your home, take it when traveling, or tuck it away when not in use. Also, consider whether you are comfortable using a laptop keyboard and touchpad; if not, you may end up buying a mouse and a traditional keyboard.

If you have dedicated space (such as a home office) for a computer, a desktop may offer more value for the money. And as a general rule, it's usually easier to repair a desktop computer than a laptop—although that point may not be important since you can often replace a desktop cheaper than you can fix one.

What software is included?

When you buy a computer, it's likely that it won't come with the software programs you want. Don't assume the price includes your favorite word processing program, photo editing software, or spreadsheet program.

What kind of support is offered?

When it comes to computers, follow-up support is vital. Before making your purchase, find out what kind of technical support is provided. But, also remember that just because a company advertises 24/7 phone support doesn't mean the problem or issue can always be resolved with a simple phone call. The follow-up support factor may help you decide whether to buy online, from a discount store, or from a local dealer.



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