

March is National Nutrition Month

Developing mindful eating patterns that include nutritious and flavorful foods is an important part of an overall healthy lifestyle and should include a variety of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, fat-free dairy and lean proteins. As part of National Nutrition Month, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics encourages everyone to “Savor the Flavor of Eating Right.” How, when, why and where you eat is just as important as what you eat. Take time to enjoy the traditions and appreciate the great flavors and social experiences food can add to your life.

Discover new and exciting taste while trimming fat and sodium. Herbs and spices can add flavor. Keep a basic assortment of dried herbs and spices on hand such as oregano, garlic powder, thyme, paprika, cinnamon, nutmeg, chili powder, Italian herb seasoning, thyme and rosemary. Remember to store in airtight containers in a cool, dark cupboard.

Food nourishes the body and provides fuel to help us thrive and fight disease. Food is also a source of pleasure and enjoyment. Whether it is with family or friend, a special occasion or gathering, food often plays a central role. Research indicates family meals and meals can promote healthier eating and strengthen family relations as well as friendships.

Take time to appreciate the flavors, textures and overall eating experience. Eat slowly. Enjoy one bite at a time and focus on the different flavors and textures. Stop and take time between bits. Eating slowly not only allows you to enjoy your food, but it can help you to eat less by giving your stomach time to tell your brain that you are full.

How, when, why and where you eat is just as important as what you eat by being a mindful eater. A mindful eater can help to reset both your body and mind. It can lead to an overall healthier lifestyle. Think about where you eat most of your meals. Take a few minutes out of your busy schedule to find a nice place to mindfully eat instead of a time when you are multitasking.

Choose foods and vegetables with no added sugar whenever possible. Read food labels and avoid buying foods with added sugars such as high fructose corn syrup, dried cane syrup, evaporated cane juice, inverted sugar, molasses, sucrose, honey, agave or maple syrup. Most sodium consumed in the United States comes from salts added during commercial food processing and preparation. Use the Nutrition Facts label to compare sodium content of foods and choose products with less sodium. Reduce your intake of saturated fats by replacing them with unsaturated fats. Unsaturated fat, which includes polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fat, is found in foods such as oils, fatty fish, nuts and seeds.

Check out more resources from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics at <http://www.eatright.org/resources/national-nutriton-month>.

Resources: Adapted from Lisa Franzen-Castle, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension, *Healthy Bites Newsletter*