

Off to a Healthy Start

The start of the new year is the perfect time to establish new goals, habits, and a healthy lifestyle. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service recommends starting this year off on the right foot by getting active and eating right!

Lack of time or a busy life doesn't have to stand in the way of healthy habits. According to AgriLife Extension's Walk Across Texas program, 30 minutes a day is all it takes to start the journey of improving your health. Physical activities that increase your heart rate and get you moving can range anywhere from moderate to vigorous, depending on the level of intensity you want to achieve. Every-day activities such as cleaning, gardening, taking the stairs, or even raking the leaves counts as exercise! Additional exercises include:

- Walking
- Mowing the lawn
- Water aerobics
- Biking on level ground
- Running or jogging
- Swimming laps

Besides aiding in weight loss, exercising regularly can increase energy levels and strength, and reduce stress, says Erica Reyes, health specialist with AgriLife Extension Service. In addition to helping you feel better overall, exercise has also been proven to reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke, while helping to maintain or reduce high blood pressure, cholesterol, and diabetes.

If you're new to the active lifestyle, remember to start slow and set manageable goals for yourself. Like losing weight, getting in shape doesn't happen overnight, which is why Reyes recommends those just beginning their fitness journey follow these simple steps:

- Get out of your comfort zone
- Establish specific, measure able, attainable, relevant, and timely goals
- Try different workout activities to minimize boredom and increase muscle strength
- Keep your body fueled properly with healthy foods
- Stay hydrated
- Dress for comfort
- Learn proper form
- Get up and stretch at work to prevent being sore or stiff

In order to achieve maximum results and become healthier, supplementing your exercise with healthy and nutritious foods is key. AgriLife Extension Service's Dinner Tonight offers a variety of delicious snacks, meals and desserts that are low in calorie and high in nutrition. Sometimes even small changes in your favorite recipes make tremendous differences in terms of calories and

fat. Eating healthy doesn't mean you have to give up flavor, which is why Dinner Tonight offers some substitutions for healthier ingredients:

- Replace butter with unsweetened applesauce
- Reduce sugar by 1/3 cup or use a natural alternative to replace the sugar by using honey, agave nectar, or dates
- Use 2% or fat-free Greek yogurt instead of sour cream
- Use whole grain flour instead of all-purpose

To find more recipes and recipe substitutions, visit dinnertonight.tamu.edu. Try this kid-friendly Dinner Tonight recipe!

Taco Boats

Ingredients

- 8 ounces of lean ground beef
- 1/4 finely diced onion
- 1/2cup diced tomato
- 1teaspoon chili powder
- 1/4teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2teaspoon cumin
- 8 ounce tube of reduced fat crescent rolls
- 1cup shredded reduced fat sharp cheddar cheese

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
2. Clean your hands and your preparation area.
3. In a large skillet brown lean ground beef for 4 – 5 minutes. Add finely diced onion, diced tomato, chili powder, garlic powder, and cumin. Stir together and continue cooking until beef is cooked through. Remove from heat. Food safety note: ground beef should be cooked to a minimal internal temperature of 160 degrees Fahrenheit.
4. On two large baking sheet, unroll crescent rolls and press seams together to make one large sheet. Cut sheet into 8 squares. Divide beef mixture evenly among all 8 dough squares and top with shredded cheese. Pinch crescent roll around filling and to make a cup (or boat!) to hold filling in.
5. Bake at 375 degrees for 12 minutes or until golden brown.
6. 170 calories per taco boat.

Source: Erica Reyes, Extension Program Specialist I, Email: Erica.Reyes@ag.tamu.edu and the Dinner Tonight website.

For more information, you may contact the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office at 903-473-4580 or visit us at rains.agrilife.org. We are also on Facebook at [Facebook.com/pages/Rains-](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Rains-)

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