

Healthy Eating Habits

We all want to be healthy and oftentimes set very lofty goals of how fabulous the end result will be. However, we quickly get discouraged when we discover it can't be achieved in a couple of weeks based on the latest "fad" diet or trending health phenomenon. Adopting a healthy life-style isn't necessarily difficult, but it does take strategic planning and patience. It also is a combination of proper nutrition, exercise, and having a mind-set to being diligent and persistent in the process.

Research indicates that people who have a healthy life-style are at reduced risk for chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, high cholesterol, and hypertension. Developing a healthy eating regime can be achieved through a variety of resources for guidance.

ChooseMyPlate.gov is a great tool to get started on understanding your personalized needs to achieve a well-balanced diet. It gives you detailed information on the five areas of MyPlate, which are fruits, vegetables, grains, proteins, and dairy. While oils aren't considered an area, it does help you understand the different oils, their health benefits, the recommended daily allowances, and the ones to avoid. You can also gain a wealth of information from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Finding a good source for healthy recipes is also a key component to eating a well-balanced healthy meal. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension's Dinner Tonight website has a wealth of nutritional information and delicious, healthy meal ideas and recipes. Visit this website and sign up for weekly emails full of information.

Some easy, practical suggestions on creating a healthy eating pattern are:

1. Consume vegetables from different subgroups, such as dark green, red and orange, legumes, starchy ones, and lastly all other vegetables.
2. Limit fruit juices, which often have added sugars, and focus on whole fruit intake.
3. Make at least half or more of your grains whole grains.
4. Make it a habit to choose low-fat or fat-free dairy products.
5. Strive to eat a variety of proteins from different sources other than lean meats and poultry, such as eggs, nuts, seafood, legumes, and soy products.
6. Choose healthy fats and oils and try to avoid saturated and trans fats.
7. Try and limit your sugar and sodium intakes.
8. Replace sodas and sweetened beverages with 8-10 cups of water per day.
9. Ditch high calorie snacks for those that are more nutrient-dense, such as fresh fruits and vegetables.
10. Pre-plan your meals and snacks, this will help you avoid making unhealthy choices.

These are just a few suggestions that will help you get started on your journey to a healthy and sustainable life-style. It may take some time for you to develop a plan that works for you, so be

patient as you navigate through the process. Remember, you will sometimes get off track because life happens! The important thing is to get back on track as soon as possible and never stop making your health a priority, regardless of your hectic lifestyle.

Try this delicious, healthy salad from the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Dinner Tonight recipe collection.

Buffalo Chicken Salad

Ingredients:

- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breast, cubed
- 2 tsp. olive oil
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- 2 Tbsp. Louisiana style hot sauce
- 1 bunch romaine lettuce, chopped
- 1 cup shredded carrots
- 3 ribs chopped celery
- ½ cup fat free ranch salad dressing

Instructions:

1. Wash your hands and clean your cooking area.
2. In a large nonstick skillet, sauté chicken in oil over medium high heat until the chicken reaches an internal temperature of 165 degrees F. Drain and stir in hot sauce and pepper.
3. Divide romaine among 4 plates. Top with chicken, celery, and carrots. Serve with dressing.

Yield: 4 servings, 230 calories per serving.

Sources: MyPlate.gov, Dinner Tonight, and American College of Sports Medicine

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-County-Family-Consumer-Sciences](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Rains-County-Family-Consumer-Sciences). Go and “Like” our page to keep up with the latest news, events, and programs offered by Family & Consumer Sciences in Rains County.

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