**DATE:** April 13, 2021

**Healthy Eating for an Active Life.** Spring is here along with longer days and plenty of sunshine! It is a great time of year to get outside and get moving with activities you enjoy, especially with your family. For youth and adults participating in physical activity like hiking, swimming, or various sports, healthy eating is essential for optimizing performance. Combining good nutrition and physical activity can lead to a healthier lifestyle. The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s MyPlate website ([www.choosemyplyate.gov](http://www.choosemyplyate.gov)) has great recipes and tips to combine good nutrition and physical activity to make the most of your summer.

First, maximize with nutrient-packed foods. Give your body the nutrients it needs by eating a variety of nutrient-packed food, including whole grains, lean protein, fruits, vegetables, and low-fat or fat-free dairy. Eat fewer foods high in solid fats, added sugars, and sodium (salt).

Next, energize with grains. Your body’s quickest energy source comes from grain foods such as bread, pasta, oatmeal, cereals, and tortillas. Be sure to make at least half of your grain food choices whole-grain foods like whole-wheat bread, tortillas, pasta, and brown rice.

You do not want to forget to power up with protein. Protein is essential for building and repairing muscle. Choose lean or low-fat cuts of beef and pork, and skinless chicken or turkey. Change things up a bit and choose seafood as your protein sources once or twice a week. Quality protein choices may come from plant-based foods, too. Beans and peas (kidney, pinto, black or white, beans, chickpeas, hummus), soy products (tofu, veggie burgers, tempeh), and unsalted nuts and seeds are great sources of protein and help variety in your diet.

We all know eating fruits and vegetables is an important part of a healthy diet. You can get the nutrients your body needs by eating a variety of colors; try blue, red, or black berries; red, green, or yellow peppers; and dark greens like spinach and kale. You do not have to limit yourself to fresh fruits and vegetables, frozen, low sodium canned, dried, and 100% juice are easy options, and they keep longer!

Dairy foods, such as fat-free and low-fat milk, cheese, yogurt, and fortified soy beverages (soymilk), help build and maintain strong bones needed for everyday activities. As we age, we often drink less milk or avoid cheese product, but remember to include dairy in your diet to achieve a balanced diet.

One of my favorite things to mention is hydration. Hydration is critical to our health and especially in the hot Texas summers. Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water and avoiding sugary drinks. Try adding a lemon or orange slice for a change of flavor.

Remember, physical activity is essential for good health. Aim for at least 2 ½ hours of physical activity each week that requires moderate effort. A few examples include brisk walking, biking, swimming, and skating. Spread activities over the week but do that at least 10 minutes at a time.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact me, (903) 473-4580 or email Sarah.Latham@ag.tamu.edu. You may also read more about this and many more topics on my blog, http://agentsarah.blogspot.com/. To view upcoming events or additional information please visit https://rains.agrilife.org/ or follow Rains County AgriLife on Facebook.