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Wise Notes for Consumers

Submitted: 3-02-18

Making Fruits and Vegetables the Easy Choice!

In Texas, three out of four deaths are attributed to a chronic disease. However, studies show an intake of at least two and half cups of vegetables and fruits per day as part of a healthy eating pattern can reduce the risk of certain chronic diseases. March is National Nutrition Month®, and an opportunity to discuss how to “*Go Further with Food*”. We know a healthy eating pattern including fruits and vegetables can help to lower risks of developing chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and some cancers. Lifestyles are hectic; however, increasing fruit and vegetables can be easy. Here are a few tips from Danielle Hammond-Krueger, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Program Specialist for making fruits and vegetables the easy choice!

Choose to make half your plate fruits and vegetables. The rest of your plate should be one-quarter grains and one-quarter protein foods with low-fat dairy on the side. MyPlate is a guide to making a healthy meal yet not every meal will look like MyPlate. For example a sandwich may not fit in each portion of the plate; however, making a sandwich with whole grain bread, lean protein, a slice of low-fat cheese, and adding lots of vegetables with a side of fruit make a healthy plate.

Choose a variety of colors. The colors in fruit and vegetables are not just to make them look pretty. Fruit and vegetable colors are complex and those colors pack a healthy punch in reducing the risk of developing various chronic diseases. Be sure to vary the colors on your plate.

Choose whole fruits and vegetables over juice. Choosing whole fruits and vegetables provides fiber, less added sugar, vitamins, and minerals. Eating patterns high in these nutrients have shown to reduce the risk of developing certain cancers.

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Choose to prep your snacks ahead of time. Busy schedules can sometimes mean reaching for unhealthy snacks. During the weekend, package small snack bags of bell peppers, carrots, strawberries, or your favorite fruit or vegetable for the week. Place them in a spot you can see in the refrigerator. This may help to limit choosing less healthful and tempting snacks!

Choose to make fruits and vegetables exciting. Create a fruit and veggie contest. Making fruits and vegetables part of a child's healthy eating pattern establishes positive behaviors early. Children learn from watching you. Try having a fruit and veggie contest once a week. It can be a simple game of name five blue fruits! The prize could be choosing the fruit for dessert tonight.

Choose fruit and vegetables to start the day. Fruits can be an easy choice at breakfast food. However, mix in some vegetables too. Try adding spinach to your eggs, avocado to your toast, or tomatoes to a breakfast sandwich.

Choosing fruits and vegetables can be an easy task, if you plan and prepare healthy options in advance. Making small creative changes can benefit your overall health. Over time choosing more fruits and vegetables can help prevent chronic disease.

For more tips on improving your fruit and vegetable consumption, contact the Extension office at 627-3341.

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