National Nutrition Month:
Put Your Best Fork Forward

Chocolate PB "Ice Cream"
(recipe on page 7)
In 1996 I moved from New Zealand to England in the middle of the mad cow scare. Variant Creutzfeldt Jakob disease (vCJD), the human form of mad cow disease, was on the rise in the UK and had far reaching implications. Even here at home in the United States, thousands of cattle were slaughtered and burned to protect us against the looming biohazard. My wife was pregnant and her health was my priority. I became a VERY educated consumer, reading every food label we were considering. I scanned every product for possible contaminants avoiding all cow and sheep products. I verified with food companies if the gelatin they used was porcine(pig) or bovine(cow). My wife craved beef, so I had Aberdeen Angus shipped in from Scotland where they kept animal husbandry records back more than 100 years and there were zero cases of mad cow. It was at this time in my life that I exponentially expanded my knowledge of nutrition. I already knew about macro and micro nutrients. I knew about good vegetarian food combinations for complete proteins. I had studied performance nutrition and nutrition impact on exercise physiology throughout college. However, my real knowledge came when I moved to England because I wanted my pregnant wife to have only the best and most nutritious foods while avoiding any potential minefields.

Nutrition is vital to developmental physiology and essential for children to achieve a healthy, vibrant future. That idea is the underlying theme of National Nutrition Month which we celebrate in this issue.

This year we emphasize how each person holds a tool to make healthy choices, and with small changes we can create better health for ourselves and our families. You’ll find great tips on how to Put Your Best Fork Forward on page four.

We’ve also taken some of your best recipes that you can share with clients to help them cook some of their favorite foods with a healthy twist. The recipes begin on page six.

It’s never too early to start learning about nutrition. One of our WIC clients took that message to heart when she received custody of her great-granddaughter. Not only did they grow a garden — they earned significant recognition for it. Check out their story on page 10.

Nutrition is my passion. As we get to know each other you will see that I live and preach health. The return on investment for WIC when it comes to health is very high. Your work leads to lower incidences of obesity, diabetes, mental disorders, and blood lipid disorders just to name a few. I’m so thrilled to be part of this program and I look forward to what this year brings for all of us.

From the desk of Edgar Curtis
— Texas WIC Director
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TEXAS WIC NEWS SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:
If you have a story idea you would like to submit for consideration in the Texas WIC News please send an email to Melanie.Smith@dshs.state.tx.us.

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March is a time for celebration. In addition to saying hello to spring, we also celebrate healthy habits during National Nutrition Month®.

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics created National Nutrition Month® more than 30 years ago to promote healthy lifestyles and raise awareness of the value and expertise of registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs). What began as a week-long event in 1973 became a month-long celebration in 1980 as public curiosity for nutrition grew. Every March since then the nutrition education campaign has had a unique theme. Past taglines have included everything from Food and Fitness to 100% Fad-Free to Eat Right with Color. Last year’s theme, Savor the Flavor of Eating Right, inspired folks to enjoy the flavors of food and the benefits of sharing mealtimes together.

The theme for 2017 is Put Your Best Fork Forward. This year we emphasize how each person holds a tool to make healthy choices, and with small changes over time we can create better health for ourselves and our families. Each bite counts, and making small steps one at a time can add up to meaningful health rewards. There is no better time to load up your fork with delicious fruits and vegetables!
Ways to Celebrate
National Nutrition Month® encourages nutrition professionals all over the country to join together with families, schools, and communities to promote healthy eating and activity. The WIC program is especially well-positioned to leverage the campaign’s momentum to maximize our messages both in WIC clinics and out in the community. Below are a few ways to get involved.

WIC Clinics
If you are short on time, try putting up a banner or a few decorations in the clinic to highlight the special month. Get staff involved by brainstorming ideas. Here are a few to consider:

- Create a bulletin board in a prominent place in your clinic, highlighting the month's theme with recipes and ideas for clients.
- Invite clients to share their tips for healthy eating and display them in the clinic for all to see.
- Plan a healthy potluck lunch for staff, or try a healthy snack competition.
- Invite staff to share small positive changes they have made in a monthly staff meeting.
- Send weekly emails to staff with inspiring Put Your Best Fork Forward tips.
- Challenge staff to come up with a new way to prepare a fruit or vegetable each day of the month, and then ask staff and clients to vote on their favorites.

Schools
As children graduate from WIC and head off to schools across Texas, we hope that healthy habits continue. Whether you are a parent or not, supporting local schools is a great way to ensure healthy messages continue to reach our youth. Some ideas for schools include:

- Start or help maintain a garden at the school. A few container plants provide a great learning opportunity for students.
- Set up a taste test of fruits and vegetables, and ask kids to share their favorite ways to eat them.
- Plan a field trip to a local farmers’ market or farm.
- Facilitate a nutrition education lesson in gym class or at an after-school program.

Communities
When the community around us embraces healthy habits, we are much more likely to join in too. National Nutrition Month® is a perfect time to get out into the community for some fun.

- Plan fun food activities for kids during story time at a local library.
- Organize a family friendly event at a park or community center.
- Invite local chefs and dietitians to participate in a cooking demo, or sponsor a healthy recipe contest.
- Host a food drive benefiting local food banks with healthy non-perishable items.

Families
However you choose to celebrate National Nutrition Month®, remember that healthy habits start at home. Challenge yourself to one new healthy habit with your family. Try one of these or pick one on your own.

- Try one new way to prepare a fruit or vegetable each week.
- Throw a healthy potluck with neighbors.
- Visit a farmers’ market as a family and choose one new food to try.
- Commit to one more family meal each week.

Where to Learn More
For more information on National Nutrition Month®, check out the website at http://www.eatright.org/resources/national-nutrition-month. The site contains lots of additional ideas, resources such as tip sheets for families and communities, and even some fun online nutrition games like nutrition Sudoku.

While every month at WIC is a celebration of healthy habits, March is extra special. Embrace the momentum of National Nutrition Month® to try a new healthy habit with your family, commit to something fun at your clinic, or join forces with a community partner for an event. Whatever you choose to do, remember that your efforts to Put Your Best Fork Forward every day at WIC make a positive impact on thousands of lives.

Reference
Making Naughty Foods Nice

**Healthier Enchiladas**
SUBMITTED BY JESSICA LA, NUTRITIONIST, KILLEEN WIC OFFICE (LA 31)

**Ingredients:**
8-10 corn tortillas
8 ounces low-fat Monterey Jack cheese (instead of regular cheese)
6 ounces non-fat plain Greek yogurt (instead of sour cream)
3 chicken breasts
2 cans of green enchilada sauce
Garlic salt and black pepper to taste

**Directions:**
1. Boil chicken in water until cooked thoroughly.
2. Remove chicken from water and shred in a large bowl.
3. Add Greek yogurt, garlic salt, and pepper to chicken and mix well.
4. In a 9 x 13 inch baking dish, layer ingredients:
   - 1st layer- pour ½ inch enchilada sauce
   - 2nd layer- place 4-5 tortillas on top of the sauce in a single layer
   - 3rd layer- top with half of the chicken mixture
   - 4th layer- sprinkle ⅓ of the cheese
   - 5th layer- pour ⅓ enchilada sauce over cheese
   - 6th layer- repeat the layers with the remaining ingredients (tortillas, chicken mixture, cheese and sauce)
5. Cover baking dish with aluminum foil and bake at 350°F for 45 minutes.
6. Uncover and let it bake for another 5 minutes.

**Chicken and Quinoa Stuffed Bell Peppers**
SUBMITTED BY TIFFANY QUEVEDO, RDN, LD, WIC ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, LUBBOCK WIC (LA 27)

**Ingredients:**
2 cooked shredded chicken breasts (rotisserie chicken can be used)
4 bell peppers (any color)
1 cup of chicken broth (I use the broth from the boiled chicken breasts)
1 cup of cooked quinoa (follow the cooking instructions on the package)
½ cup of shredded mild cheddar cheese
1-2 tablespoon of your favorite salsa
1 teaspoon of olive or canola oil
1 teaspoon of minced garlic
½ onion
¼ teaspoon of paprika
Salt and pepper to taste

**Directions:**
1. Sauté the onions and chicken with 1 teaspoon of olive or canola oil for 1-2 minutes.
2. Add chicken broth, cooked quinoa, salsa, minced garlic, paprika, salt and pepper.
3. Simmer for 10 minutes.
4. Cut the bell peppers in half and stuff with the chicken mixture and top with cheese.
5. Place the stuffed bell peppers in baking dish and bake at 375°F for 20-25 minutes.
6. Enjoy your healthy stuffed bell peppers.
Pureed Cauliflower “Mashed Potatoes”
Submitted by Chris Houtchen, Vendor Liaison Coordinator, City of Dallas WIC Program (LA 07)

This recipe tastes so much like mashed potatoes, it’s hard to believe it’s not the real thing. So simple and nutritious, too!

**Ingredients:**
- 1 head of cauliflower
- ½ cup low-fat milk
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 ounce cheese, grated (cheddar or Monterrey Jack works, or pick your favorite)
- Salt and pepper to taste

**Directions:**
Remove the core and any leaves from the cauliflower and place stem side down on a steam rack in a large saucepan. Fill bottom of pan with water until water almost touches the cauliflower. Cover and allow to steam until cauliflower softens and can be easily pierced with a fork (10-15 min). Remove any excess water and the steam rack. Add milk and butter. Using bean masher or electric mixer, smash and mix cauliflower and liquid, adding more milk as needed to give a mashed-potato consistency. Add cheese and continue to blend until smooth. Add salt and pepper and enjoy. **Makes about 12 ½-cup servings.**

Healthy Burger
Submitted by Esther Lozano, Peer Counselor, Denton (LA 35)

**Ingredients:**
- 2 tablespoons coconut oil
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 1 cup finely chopped mushrooms
- 1 small zucchini, shredded
- 1 pound ground turkey meat
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 egg
- ¼ cup rolled oats
- ½ tablespoon paprika
- ¼ teaspoon celery seed
- ½ teaspoon ground pepper
- 1 teaspoon salt

**Directions:**
Place a skillet over medium heat. Add tablespoon of the oil and the onion. Sauté the onion until it is translucent (3-4 min). Remove the onion and set aside. Place the mushrooms in the pan and sauté until most of the water has evaporated (5 min). Then place the onion back in the pan along with the zucchini. Sauté until the zucchini is just tender.

In a medium bowl, combine the turkey meat, garlic, egg, oats, paprika, celery seed, pepper and salt. Stir in the sautéed vegetables and form into 8 patties just smaller than your palm. Place the skillet back over medium heat and add the remaining tablespoon of oil, then the burgers. Cook for 15 minutes or until desired doneness, flipping only once. **Makes 8 servings.**

Chocolate PB “Ice Cream”
Submitted by Jacie Slocum, RDN, LD, WIC Program Specialist, Lubbock WIC (LA 27)

**Ingredients:**
- 2 chopped frozen bananas
- 2 tablespoons peanut butter
- 1 tablespoon cocoa powder

**Directions:**
1. Chop and freeze at least 2 bananas. They must be frozen for this to work. (Whenever my bananas start turning brown I just cut them up and throw them in the freezer so that I always have some ready).
2. Once frozen, place 2 chopped bananas into your food processor (or a blender) and blend until smooth. You may have to blend and open your processor a few times to stir. Feel free to add a little water or milk to help the bananas blend faster.
3. Add 2 tablespoons of peanut butter and 1 tablespoon of cocoa powder, and mix well.
4. Serve and eat immediately. Enjoy!
**Triple-Cheese Italian Spaghetti Squash**  
**Submitted by Jessica Leyendecker, MPH, Engagement Specialist, State Office**

These cheesy spaghetti squash boats are easy to throw together and clean-up is a breeze.

**Ingredients:**
- 1 spaghetti squash
- 1 jar marinara
- ½ cup ricotta cheese
- ¼ cup parmesan cheese
- ½ cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- Olive oil
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning or mixture of dried basil, rosemary, and oregano
- Salt & pepper

**Directions:**
1. Preheat oven to 425°F.
2. Pierce spaghetti squash with a fork several times and cook in microwave for 3 minutes. This will help soften the squash and make it easier to cut with a knife.
3. Cut squash lengthwise and scoop out the seeds with a spoon.
4. Brush olive oil on squash and season with salt and pepper. Place cut side down on a foil lined baking pan and cook for about 20 minutes, or until squash is soft.
5. While squash is cooking, mix ricotta cheese, parmesan cheese, Italian seasoning, salt and pepper in a small bowl.
6. When squash is cooked, remove it from the oven and carefully flip them over. Fill each squash half with the ricotta cheese mixture then top with marinara. Sprinkle the shredded mozzarella on top. Bake in the oven for an additional 15 minutes, or until the cheese is melted and brown. You can eat this meal right out of the squash to dirty fewer dishes.

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**Healthy Veggie Chips – Smoky Paprika Kale Chips**  
**Submitted by Nikki Morrow, IBCLC, Assistant WIC Director, Temple WIC Office (LA 31)**

Potato chip cravings can get to the best of us. There are a lot of veggie chips on the market but they are mostly made of potato starch and coloring, contain very little real vegetables and are usually just as high in calories and fat as regular potato chips. Making your own veggie chips may take a bit more time than popping open a bag of chips but your waist will be glad you did.

*Prep time: 10 minutes  •  total time: 30 minutes  •  servings: 6*

**Ingredients:**
- 1 large bunch kale
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 tablespoon smoked paprika
- ½ teaspoon salt

**Directions:**
1. Heat oven to 400°F. Remove the tough stems from the kale and wash and tear the leaves into large pieces. In a large bowl, toss the kale pieces with the olive oil and paprika.
2. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper, scatter the kale on top, and roast until the greens are dry and crispy, about 30 minutes, tossing every 10 minutes to toast evenly. Sprinkle with the sea salt and serve.
**Zoodles alla Rustica – Zucchini Noodles with Tomato Sauce**

Submitted by Beth Malloy, MS, RD, LD, Lufkin WIC (LA 58)

**Ingredients:**

- 2 zucchini
- ½ red onion
- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine
- 1 clove (or ½ teaspoon minced) garlic
- 2 tablespoons white wine (or substitute white grape juice)
- 1 large can crushed tomatoes
- 5 tablespoons parmesan cheese

**Directions:**

1. Start by spiralizing your zucchini. A spiralizer works best to create long, curly zoodles but you could also use a vegetable peeler to slice the zucchini into long thin strips. To use a spiralizer, cut the ends off of the zucchini and then spiralize on the thickest setting.
2. Next slice the red onion into long thin strips.
3. Melt the butter or margarine in a skillet over medium heat. Once it has melted, crush the garlic (if using fresh garlic) with a garlic press and stir it into the butter. After one minute, add the red onion and white wine (or juice). Stir to combine, and let simmer for 5 minutes, stirring frequently. Cook until the onion is slightly browned.
4. Add the tomatoes and stir to combine. Let simmer for another 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. This will thicken the sauce.
5. Finally, stir the parmesan cheese and zucchini noodles into the sauce. Let the zoodles cook for 3 minutes. They should be warm, but still al dente. Serve immediately. Serves 2.

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**Creamy Avocado & Spinach Pasta Recipe**

Submitted by Luis L. Gonzalez, Health and Nutrition Specialist, San Marcos WIC (LA 36)

**Ingredients:**

- 1 pound of your favorite pasta (boiled)
- 1 tablespoon of olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves
- 4 cups or handfuls of spinach
- 2 avocados, skin and pits removed
- ¼ cup of fresh parsley or basil
- ¼ cup of parmesan cheese
- 2 teaspoons of lemon juice
- ¾ to 1 cup of pasta water
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Crushed red pepper (optional)

**Directions:**

1. In a large pot of boiling salted water, cook pasta according to directions. Save 1 cup of pasta water before draining.
2. While pasta is cooking, heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add garlic and sauté for 1 minute until golden brown. Add spinach and sauté until spinach is completely wilted.
3. In a blender or food processor, add sautéed garlic and spinach, avocados, parsley or basil, lemon juice, pepper and salt. Slowly add ¾ cup of pasta water and blend again (if sauce seems too thick, add a little more pasta water). Add cheese and blend.
4. In a large serving bowl, toss hot pasta with spinach avocado sauce. Sprinkle with more cheese and crushed red pepper and serve.
Gardening with A’mya

Written by Sherrie Rucker
Submitted by Janna Kaelin
WIC Program Administrator
Wichita Falls (LA 21)

Editor’s note: In March, Sherrie Rucker achieved what many of us look forward to — retirement. But for this great-grandmother, retirement did not equal rest. In fact, her hard work lead to an award, priceless time with her great-granddaughter, and a new way to get a 3-year-old interested in vegetables. Here’s her story in her own words.

Our lives changed when we received custody of our great-granddaughter A’mya. At the time, my granddaughter was receiving WIC benefits and I went to the WIC office to see if I could keep A’mya on WIC since her mother no longer had custody. I showed the ladies in the front office our paperwork from the judge and they helped me complete the new information necessary for benefits.

There was an adjustment, of course, but the spring and summer was a great time for A’mya and me. She likes to be outside and is curious about how everything grows so I decided to plant a garden. I bought her a watering can (Minnie Mouse, of course) so she could water the plants herself. For fruit we planted peach and pear trees, strawberries, blueberries, watermelons, and cantaloupe. As for vegetables, we planted squash, eggplant, cucumbers, okra, bell peppers, green beans, tomatoes, asparagus, corn, and onions. We also planted basil and cilantro. We would go into the garden every morning to see what plants were growing. Sometimes we would even have a picnic and eat our breakfast in the garden before it got too hot.

As our fruits and vegetables grew, we shared them with church members and other friends. They all enjoyed them. A’mya did too. If she likes it, she says, “Yummy.” If not, the food comes back out of her mouth. Her favorites are strawberries, corn, green beans, and cantaloupe.

A friend enjoyed our pickles so much that we were encouraged to enter our pickles in the Texas Oklahoma Fair competition. We took that advice and upon harvesting the cucumbers, we made kosher dill pickles. A’mya helped in the packing of the cucumbers, placing the small hot peppers and the garlic cloves in the jars. I gave her the two dollars to pay the entry fee, filled out the paperwork, and the waiting game began. Two days later when we checked our entry there was a blue ribbon on the jar! I told A’mya that “we won” and she was so excited.

A’mya now understands and appreciates the hard work that goes into growing vegetables. She knows she has to have gloves to pick some veggies as they have “stickers.” Other veggies hide under their leaves that have to be lifted up to find the prize. I have made some produce a game of “Hide and Seek.” Also, when we visit the farmers’ market, she tells the ladies which vegetables she’s growing in her garden.

To this day we are still being blessed with produce. In early fall, A’mya planted pumpkins, and while they weren’t ready for Halloween, she did have some large ones for Thanksgiving. A’mya totally enjoyed the whole learning process of gardening this summer. As for me, our time together was priceless.
Amazing Human Body 101: Our Gut-Brain Connection and Stress

CONTRIBUTED BY KATIE OLIVER, MS, RD, WIC WELLNESS COORDINATOR

Have you ever been so nervous that you felt “butterflies” or even “sick to your stomach” before a big event?

These expressions make sense because our gastrointestinal tract, also called the GI tract, is sensitive to emotions, including the feelings of anger, anxiety, sadness, and happiness. The brain and gut are directly connected and this connection goes both ways, leading scientists to refer to our gut as the “second brain” or the enteric nervous system or ENS. The GI tract is made up of two layers of more than 100 million nerve cells from the esophagus to the rectum. These nerve cells are able to send and receive signals from the brain. Our two brains can talk to each other, a stressed or irritated intestine can send signals to the brain and a stressed brain can send signals to the gut.

In people with GI disorders such as Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), Crohn’s Disease, or other problems like constipation, diarrhea, bloating, pain, and upset stomach, the ENS of the GI tract can trigger emotional shifts. Stress or depression can affect the movement of stools, make inflammation worse, and could even make you more susceptible to infection. In the past, researchers have thought that anxiety and depression contributed to GI problems, but many studies now show that it may also be the other way around. More recent studies have also shown that patients with GI disorders can perceive pain more intensely than other people because their brain is not communicating pain signals from their gut correctly. These studies indicate a gut to brain communication pathway versus a brain to gut communication pathway. The new findings were supported by a review of 13 studies that showed patients who tried psychological based approaches to treat anxiety or depression had greater improvement in their digestive symptoms compared to patients who were only treated with conventional medical treatment.

All of these findings are important because 30-40 percent of the population are affected by functional bowel problems and an even higher percentage are affected by stress at some point in their life. If you think stress could be contributing to your GI symptoms, discuss them with your doctor.

References
Feeling Blue? Then Antioxidants are for You!
Fighting Stress, Depression, and Anxiety with Fruits and Vegetables
Contributed By Kathryn MacLean, former Texas State Dietetic Intern

Almost all adults struggle with some form of stress, and many also battle anxiety and depression. These conditions are treated in a number of ways; including increased physical activity like walking or yoga, meditation and relaxation, journaling, and various medications. However, many people forget the effect that diet has on their mental health. Different foods have different nutrients, and the presence or absence of certain nutrients in the diet can have a large effect on our moods.

In particular, antioxidants may improve our ability to fight anxiety and depression. Antioxidants work by eliminating damaging particles or ‘free radicals’ created in the body as a result of normal body processes as well as exposure to polluted air or smoking cigarettes. These damaging particles put a large amount of stress on the body. That stress is thought to contribute to depression and anxiety and can also lead to skin and tissue damage and cancer development. Since antioxidants work to get rid of the damaging free radicals, they also help us to fight the conditions free radicals can cause. The research shows people who consume a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, and therefore also rich in antioxidants, tend to have lower rates of depression and anxiety than those who don’t. Several research studies looked at Vitamins A, E, and C and how their antioxidant power might help our bodies fight depression and anxiety. The results? They really do help, but the antioxidants often work more powerfully when eaten as whole food. This is because the foods have other nutrients that support the antioxidants.

Here is a reminder of foods rich in antioxidants:

**Beta-carotene (converted to Vitamin A in the Body):**
- Carrots
- Sweet Potatoes
- Pumpkin
- Peaches
- Apricots
- Mango
- Greens
- Broccoli

**Vitamin C:**
- Peppers
- Oranges, or other citrus fruits
- Tomatoes
- Blueberries
- Strawberries
- Raspberries
- Kiwi

**Vitamin E:**
- Nuts and seeds
- Greens
- Whole grains
- Wheat germ
- Vegetable Oil
- Broccoli
- Tomatoes

(continued on WWW — Insert D)
Recipe

Easy After School or After Work Apricot Granola Bars:

Makes: 16 bars
Serving size: 1 bar

Ingredients
2 teaspoons all-purpose flour
⅔ cup all-purpose flour
⅓ cup whole-wheat flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
1 cup packed brown sugar
¼ cup canola oil
2 tablespoons fat-free milk
2 large eggs
1½ cup whole-grain granola
¾ cup chopped dried apricots
½ cup flaked sweetened coconut

Preparation
Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Use a 13 x 9 inch metal baking sheet and coat with cooking spray. Dust baking sheet with 2 teaspoons all-purpose flour. Lightly spoon ⅔ cup all-purpose flour and ⅓ cup whole-wheat flour into dry measuring cups and level with a knife. Combine flours, baking powder, and salt into a small mixing bowl and stir with a whisk. Combine sugar, milk, oil, and eggs in a large mixing bowl and beat with a mixer at high speed until smooth. Add flour mixture to the large mixing bowl and continue beating at a high speed until smooth. Add flour mixture to the large mixing bowl and continue beating at a low speed until blended. Fold in granola and fruit with a spoon or spatula. Spoon batter into prepared pan and spread evenly. Sprinkle with coconut. Bake batter at 350°F for 20 minutes or until golden brown. Cool completely in pan on a wire rack. When cool cut into 16 bars.

Nutrition Information Per Serving (1 bar)
154 calories, 5.8 g total fat (1.5 g saturated fat), 26 mg cholesterol, 148 mg sodium, 23.4 g carbohydrates (1.7 g dietary fiber), 2.7 g protein

Texas Seasonal Produce

Fruits:
Blackberries, grapefruit, oranges, peaches

Vegetables:
Beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, cucumbers, greens, herbs, lettuce, mushrooms, kale, kohlrabi, onions, sweet onions, field peas, potatoes, spinach, squash, sweet potatoes, greenhouse tomatoes, turnips, zucchini
Apply it! Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Make a fruit smoothie (try adding some greens in there).
- Munch on some almonds or other nuts and seeds or add them to a salad.
- Add berries and wheat germ to some yogurt for extra flavor and crunch.
- Snack on a piece of fruit.
- Have a sandwich using whole-grain bread, lots of tomatoes and spinach, and some lean turkey.
- Throw together a quick vegetable stir fry with brown rice for dinner.

Be creative! You can add these foods into your diet in lots of different ways, so do it in a way that works best for you. Just be sure to get your daily dose of antioxidants; it might just improve your mood, not to mention your health.

References

TXIN: Yea or Nay?

by Candace Stohs-Krause
Communications Manager
TXIN Project, WIC

Now that the basic development of the new TXIN system is complete, the TXIN team is preparing for the next stage in the process: User Acceptance Testing.

What is User Acceptance Testing?

Exactly what it sounds like – users (LA and State staff) are testing the system to see whether or not we want to accept or approve it. In a nutshell, TXIN team members and local agency representatives are testing the first draft of the new TXIN system to double-check that all of the necessary functionality is included, and it’s working the way it’s supposed to.

How Does it Work?

To do this, the testers will go through a number of steps:

1. **Follow a Test Script.** Each tester will start with a test script – it tells the tester what steps to take in the system to complete a real-life, clinic-based scenario. The test script includes all pertinent information, like the participant’s demographics, income, health history, biometrics, etc.
   - *Example Test Script:* A pregnant woman comes into the clinic with her 4-year-old child. She is a new participant and needs to get certified and issued benefits.
   - *Example Steps:* The tester walks through the system according to the step-by-step instructions included in the test script.

2. **Take Note of Errors.** If the tester encounters any issues or errors while working through the test script, they will record them in a feedback form.
   - *Example Error:* After entering all of the relevant participant information, the “Certify” button is supposed to appear automatically, but it doesn’t.

3. **Submit Feedback.** Once all the errors have been identified and recorded, the tester will submit them to Vexcel, our development vendor, so that fixes and updates can be made.

What's Next?

Once we’ve completed User Acceptance Testing, all of the bugs in TXIN should be fixed and we will officially accept the new system. However, because WIC has a lot of complex processes and procedures, there’s a good chance that a few errors will still be hidden deep in the system.

This is why we’re doing a pilot phase – while they’re live on TXIN and using it to serve participants, our pilot local agencies are going to figure out and help us fix those last few kinks. By the time the rest of the state rolls out, all of the bugs should be fixed and everything will be ready to go.

Stay tuned to WIC News and the Mosaic Integrated Insider Newsletter for more information over the next several months, and contact TXIN@DSHS.Texas.Gov with any questions.
5 Tips for Healthy Snacking

by Jessi Cano, RD, IBCLC
Infant Feeding Strategist

It’s 3 p.m. on a Saturday, you’ve been running errands with the kids and now they’re STARVING. Luckily, you’re at the grocery store, so there are plenty of options. Fruit? NO! Baby carrots? YUCK! String cheese? WAAAAHH! All they are interested in are cookies, candy, chips, junk. Why?! How can you convince them that healthy foods are a satisfying option?

While there is no magic key to getting kids to make healthier choices, there are a few things we can do as parents to steer them in the right direction. Here are five tips to help you get your child to enjoy healthy snacking.

1. Let Them Choose
Children have very little choice or control over what happens in their day. We are in charge of their schedules, activities, their clothes, and their food. So it’s no surprise that they try to flex their muscles from time to time. Often we see that power struggle happen with food. We can provide the food, but we can’t make them eat it. One way to combat that struggle — let them choose! Next time you’re at the store, let your picky eater select any new food they want from the produce section. Together you can find new recipes for it, cut it open to see what color it will be, and prepare and taste it. When kids get a say in what they are eating, they are much more likely to give something a try.

2. Model It
It is hard to expect our kids to eat healthy foods if we’re not willing to do it ourselves. “Do as I say, not as I do” does not tend to work when it comes to healthy eating. If you tell your child to snack on celery sticks while
you’re munching on cookies, it’s not setting the best example, and it’s probably not going to work for long. Your kids think you are the most amazing person in the world and they want to be just like you. If they see you enjoying healthy snack options, they will be more likely to try them. If you’re not a huge fan of healthy things, this is a great opportunity to make a change for the better in your life too. You can explore options together and find things that you both like. Maybe even take a tip or two off of this list to try for yourself.

3. Make It Available
Having healthy foods on hand at all times is the best way to get your child to enjoy healthy snacking. Try to always have fruits and vegetables, low fat yogurt, whole grain crackers, etc. available for everyone to enjoy. It’s easy to eat healthy if the only options you have are healthy foods. Bypass the junk aisle when you’re buying groceries and stock up on things that are easy to grab and easy to take with you for times when you’ll be out of the house. It takes extra planning to have healthy snacks with you when you’re out, but it’s the best way to avoid being at the mercy of wherever you are when your child decides they MUST SNACK NOW. All too often when that time comes, the only thing around is a vending machine or gas station and the options are not typically the greatest. So plan ahead and try to always have a healthy option with you so you never find yourself in a bind.

4. Dip It
Kids are busy creatures. They are constantly moving and playing. You can make their snacks part of the fun if you include a dip for them to dive into. Provide a little hummus or ranch dip for your child’s next veggie snack, or some yogurt to dip fruit in. Dipping makes the healthy foods more fun and can give the child added incentive to try a food that may otherwise seem uninteresting. They make easy and convenient dipping packs now too for those snacks on the run.

5. Make it Fun
So much of a child’s learning is done through playing. Kids sing songs to learn their alphabet, play games to learn about addition and subtraction, and do crafts related to every subject. Learning about tastes and smells of new foods can be fun too. Make funny faces on the plate with healthy foods. Play a game to see how many different colors you can include in a meal or snack.

Healthy eating does not have to be a chore, and raising your children to enjoy healthy snacking does not have to be a battle. Start them young, be consistent, forgive yourself for the occasional slip up, and know that it takes practice. You’re building the foundation for the rest of your children’s lives, and it’s a big responsibility. Take pride in the fact that you are doing what is best for them now and teaching them how to make those healthy choices for themselves in the future. Happy snacking.
Let Them Eat Cake

6 Steps For High Risk Counseling

by Jenifer Gregory, RD
Nutrition Education Coordinator, LA 20

I remember the first time I saw Emmanuel. His mother brought him to the WIC clinic for a high-risk nutrition counseling appointment. He seemed very quiet and shy, and he clung tightly to his mother. As young children often do, he became very upset when I weighed and measured him. His mother said that he was scared to go to any clinic because he had been poked and prodded at many doctor appointments and ER visits due to testing and treatment for reactions to multiple food allergies.

The first high-risk counseling appointment was a lengthy one. Emmanuel's mother explained his history of dealing with food allergies. He was diagnosed with milk and soy allergies as an infant. As he grew older and was introduced to more foods, the food allergy diagnoses continued to expand. By the time he was 3 years old, Emmanuel's doctor had diagnosed him with multiple food allergies including allergies to milk, soy, eggs, and wheat.

Emmanuel's mother came prepared for their appointment with a folder of paperwork: a prescription from an allergist for WIC to provide an elemental formula, allergy test results, and diet orders that outlined which foods must be avoided. Emmanuel was a small child who was experiencing poor growth, and his mother was well aware of this. We discussed ways to increase his intake and help promote healthy growth. We also talked about the many foods and ingredients he must avoid, all while trying to focus on those which he could still enjoy. There was so much information to cover, and Emmanuel's mother agreed to return to the clinic the next month for follow-up.

When Emmanuel and his mother returned to the clinic, she brought along a large bag filled with food packages found in the pantry at their home. I remember going through each food package with her and looking at the list of ingredients to help her decipher the safe foods from those that contained allergens.

I noticed that Emmanuel's fourth birthday was coming up the following month, and I asked his mother how they planned to celebrate. I could tell that question really struck a nerve with her. She expressed sadness that he had celebrated three birthdays but never had a birthday cake. Emmanuel had three siblings and a large extended family. He had attended many birthday gatherings, but cake was never part of the celebration for him. Emmanuel wanted to eat cake, and he didn't understand why he couldn't have it. His mother did the best she could to offer him a special treat at birth-
day parties. She would prepare homemade ice pops from juice ahead of time and pack them on ice in a small cooler. When cake was served to all of the party attendees, she would give him an ice pop. For Emmanuel’s birthday, his mother would typically prepare a cup of gelatin in place of a birthday cake. This was the only safe treat she could think of that would hold a birthday candle.

Seeing the tears in his mother’s eyes and hearing the sadness in her voice pulled at my heartstrings. Birthdays are such an important part of a child’s life. It is the one day of the year that is special and unique to him. No birthday is complete without a piece of cake. It was in that moment I knew that something had to change.

Finding Solutions
As a dietitian, I often find myself counseling clients on ways to substitute healthy foods in place of those with minimal nutritional value. I would venture to say that every dietitian, nutritionist, or certifying authority (CA) that works with WIC has counseled families to offer fruit as a nutritious substitute for sweets. That hardly seemed fitting for a child’s birthday celebration, especially for a child that had never experienced the taste of cake.

Oftentimes we focus on what we can’t do with high-risk clients. Sometimes we find more success when we instead focus on what we CAN do. First, we have to consider the condition. High-risk counseling at WIC includes a variety of conditions. We see women diagnosed with gestational diabetes, infants and children with failure to thrive, premature infants, adult and childhood obesity, women with hyperemesis gravidarum, and many other clients with various medical conditions. Although each of these conditions is different, we can implement some of the same principles during nutrition counseling.

- **Be attentive.** Ask open-ended questions, and listen to what is important to the client. Some clients are more concerned about the social and emotional implications of their condition or their child’s condition. Sometimes, making changes to meet their nutritional needs is not high on their priority list. It is our job as nutrition professionals to find a way to tie these together.

- **Prioritize.** Assess the client’s nutrition needs and determine, along with the client, two or three areas that are most important for treating the nutrition condition. Focus on these areas first.

- **Educate.** Teach clients about healthy portion sizes, how to read food labels, how to modify recipes to meet their needs, and how to make healthy substitutions. Keep the focus on the foods they can eat versus what they should avoid.

- **Empower.** Give clients the tools they need to succeed. Give them recipes that are appropriate for the nutrition condition, especially recipes that the whole family can enjoy. Offer a list of reputable websites, cell phone apps, handouts, or other information they can access on their own.

- **Set a goal.** Work with clients to help transform their plans for improvement into a goal that is SMART – specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely. Clients who commit to working on a goal are more likely to achieve the desired outcome.

- **Provide ongoing support.** Be your client’s biggest cheerleader. Congratulate each family on their successes. Encourage them when they fall short of their goals.

The Cake
While making sure that children with food allergies meet their nutritional needs is essential, it is also important to help their families find ways to make mealtimes and celebrations a normal experience. I realized that’s exactly how I could help Emmanuel. I began searching for a cake recipe that was milk, soy, egg, and wheat free. I immediately accessed the resources available from Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE). Many of the cake recipes I found were milk, soy, and egg free but still contained a wheat based flour. Finally, I found instructions to make a wheat free flour mix, so I modified the cake recipe to include the mix. When I gave the recipe to Emmanuel’s mother, she was overjoyed to have the opportunity to make Emmanuel’s first birthday cake. I still remember the look on Emmanuel’s face when he told me about his 4th birthday party, and he was especially proud of the birthday cake his mother made. No birthday is complete without cake, so let them eat cake, even if it means finding a special recipe.
Promoting Public Health

by Kristina Arrieta, MPH, IBCLC
Peer Counselor Coordinator

Public Health Week is April 3-9. This is a time to recognize the contributions of public health and highlight the issues that are important to improving our nation. WIC works hard to promote and protect the health of our families. Through nutrition, education, and dissemination of important health information, WIC is improving lifelong wellness within our communities.

The main focus of clinical professionals is treating the sick and injured. Public health professionals, like the staff of the WIC program, try to prevent sickness or injury from happening. WIC does this by promoting best practices such as encouraging behaviors that promote healthy pregnancies, supporting breastfeeding, educating on the best nutrition choices, and sharing researched information from health experts. Although children are only on the program from birth until the age of five, the information WIC provides can help prevent illness and injury and promote healthy lifestyle choices that families can benefit from throughout their lives.

To have the greatest impact on the health of our communities, WIC often works with other programs to provide our clients with the most up to date information. Most recently, WIC began sharing American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) guidelines on safe sleep and limiting screen time. These topics are important to our families and their wellbeing. The information was released on October 24, 2016 and should be shared with our WIC families.

**Safe Sleep**

The press release from the AAP states that “approximately 3,500 infants die annually in the United States from sleep-related deaths, including sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS); ill-defined deaths; and accidental suffocation and strangulation. The number of infant deaths initially decreased in the 1990s after a national safe sleep campaign, but has plateaued in recent years.”

AAP recommendations on creating a safe sleep environment include:

- Place the baby on his or her back on a firm sleep surface such as a crib or bassinet with a tight-fitting sheet.
- Avoid use of soft bedding, including crib bumpers, blankets, pillows, and soft toys. The crib should be bare.
- Share a bedroom with parents, but not the same sleeping surface, preferably until the baby turns 1 year old, but at least for the first six months. Room-sharing decreases the risk of SIDS by as much as 50 percent.
- Avoid baby’s exposure to smoke, alcohol, and illicit drugs.
- Offer a pacifier at nap time and bedtime after breastfeeding is established.
- Do not use home monitors or commercial devices, including wedges or positioners, marketed to reduce the risk of SIDS.
- Infants should receive all recommended vaccinations.
- Supervised, awake tummy time is recommended daily to facilitate development.

In the report, the AAP recommends skin-to-skin care regardless of feeding or delivery method, immediately following birth for at least an hour as soon as the mother is medically stable and awake. The report also recognizes breastfeeding as a protective factor against SIDS.

The AAP does not recommend that the infant sleep on the same sleeping surface as the parent; however, they do recognize that this may occur.

“If you are feeding your baby and think that there’s even the slightest possibility that you may fall asleep, feed your baby on your bed, rather than a sofa or cushioned chair,” said Lori Feldman-Winter, MD, FAAP, member of the Task
Force on SIDS and co-author of the report. “If you do fall asleep, as soon as you wake up be sure to move the baby to his or her own bed,” she said. “There should be no pillows, sheets, blankets, or other items that could obstruct the infant’s breathing or cause overheating.”

Most incidents of SIDS occur between 1 and 4 months, but new evidence indicates that soft bedding is still hazardous to infants over 4 months. Many parents may feel that the infant is old enough for soft surfaces at this point and put the infant at risk without understanding the danger. If the parents have questions about safe sleep they should be encouraged to speak to their doctor. The AAP is encouraging its doctors to have “open and nonjudgmental conversations with families about sleep practices.”

**Limiting Screen Time**
The second recommendation released was regarding digital media, which the AAP recognizes has both positive and negative effects on development. The Academy has developed a Family Media Use Plan, an interactive, online tool, for families to use as a resource to help guide them in today’s digital world to balance digital and real life from birth to adulthood.

“Families should proactively think about their children’s media use and talk with children about it, because too much media use can mean that children don’t have enough time during the day to play, study, talk, or sleep,” said Jenny Radesky, MD, FAAP, lead author of the policy statement, “Media and Young Minds,” which focuses on infants, toddlers, and preschool children. “What’s most important is that parents be their child’s media mentor. That means teaching them how to use it as a tool to create, connect, and learn.”

“Parents play an important role in helping children and teens navigate media, which can have both positive and negative effects,” said Megan Moreno, MD, MSeD, MPH, FAAP, lead author of the policy statement on media use in school-aged children and teens. “Parents can set expectations and boundaries to make sure their children’s media experience is a positive one. The key is mindful use of media within a family.” The AAP cautions that excessive media time can result in decreased physical activity and sleep, which are important for optimal health. Too much screen time can also decrease hands-on exploration and face-to-face social interaction in the real world, which is important for learning.

Among the AAP recommendations:
- For children younger than 18 months, avoid use of screen media other than video-chatting. Parents of children 18 to 24 months of age who want to introduce digital media should choose high-quality programming, and watch it with their children to help them understand what they’re seeing.
- For children ages 2 to 5 years, limit screen use to 1 hour per day of high-quality programs. Parents should co-view media with children to help them understand what they are seeing and apply it to the world around them.
- For children ages 6 and older, place consistent limits on the time spent using media, and the types of media, and make sure media does not take the place of adequate sleep, physical activity and other behaviors essential to health.
- Designate media-free times together, such as dinner or driving, as well as media-free locations at home, such as bedrooms.
- Have ongoing communication about online citizenship and safety, including treating others with respect online and offline.

The AAP recognizes the importance of digital media in today’s world, but encourages parents to be involved in what their children are watching and how much time they are spending in front of a screen.

“Even though the media landscape is constantly changing, some of the same parenting rules apply,” said Yolanda (Linda) Reid Chassiakos, MD, FAAP, lead author of the technical report. “Parents play an important role in helping children and teens navigate the media environment, just as they help them learn how to behave off-line. The AAP wants to provide parents the evidence-based tools and recommendations to help them make their children’s media experience a positive one.”

Both recommendations are important for families and WIC has the unique opportunity to pass this message to our clients at their visits. This is what public health is about. Sharing information and making sure that our community is making informed decisions to create the healthiest lifestyle for their families.
Hello everybody! Eaton here to celebrate National Nutrition Month®. This year's theme is Put your Best Fork Forward. Hard to believe. But this theme beat out several close contenders, including NNM: Have the Time of Your Knife, NNM: Have a Plate Year! and NNM: Ladle, Ladle, Ladle — I made it a Great Day! Catchy phrases aside, March is a time to have some fun and learn a little bit about nutrition—and maybe even utensils.

Quiz:

1. True of False – In 1669, King Louis XIV of France decreed all pointed knives on the dinner table illegal.

2. Which of the following foods is not related to poison ivy
   a. Mango
   b. Strawberry
   c. Cashew
   d. Pistachio

3. True or False – The tomato is a vegetable.

4. Which of the following is the largest known organism.
   a. Honey mushroom
   b. Blue whale
   c. Kitti’s hog-nosed bat
   d. Etruscan shrew

Answers:

1. The answer is True. As forks began to gain popular acceptance, there was no longer a need for a pointed tip at the end of a dinner knife.

2. The answer is B. Mango, cashews, and pistachio are all members of the Anacardiaceae family. Along with their creepy (and creeping) cousin, poison ivy, they contain urushiol, an oily substance that can cause

   (Continued on next page)
allergic reactions, like tingly swollen lips, blisters on the skin, and in extreme cases anaphylactic shock.

3. Legally speaking, the answer is True. In 1893, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled in the case of Nix v. Hedden that tomatoes were to be considered vegetables, because they are usually served with dinner and not as a dessert. However, botanically, a tomato is a fruit because it is a seed-bearing structure growing from the flowering part of a plant. So take that Supreme Court!

4. The answer is A. While the blue whale is big, Armillaria ostoyae, the honey mushroom, is in a league of its own. Discovered in the Blue Mountains of Oregon, A. ostoyae is more than 2,384 acres – that’s more than 1,600 football fields. It is estimated to be 2,400 years old, which also makes it one of the oldest living things to boot.

Bonus joke… a mushroom walks into a restaurant and sits at a table. The waiter walks over and says, sir, I’m going to have to ask you to leave. We don’t serve your kind here. Astonished, the mushroom, says, why not? I’m a fungi. Myc. drop!

About the author: Eaton Wright is a certified NUT based in Austin, Texas.

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**Common Infant and Childhood Problems Handouts Have a New Name**

The *Common Infant Problems* (birth through 1 year) and the *Common Childhood Problems* (1 to 5 years) will now be called *Your Growing Baby* (birth through 1 year) and *Your Growing Child* (1 to 5 years). In addition, two new handouts will be added to the series: Crying (revised) and Sleep.

The full series will include:
- **Your Growing Baby** (birth through 1 year) - Spitting Up (#13-128), Crying (#13-122), Constipation (#13-123), Sleep (#13-129)
- **Your Growing Child** (1 to 5 years) - Constipation (#13-100), Diarrhea (#13-125)
- **Your Growing Baby and Child** (birth through 5 years) - Food Allergies (#13-127), Tooth Decay (#13-126), Lead Poisoning (#13-06-14017)

New titles will appear as they are available in the WIC catalog for ordering. Please continue to deplete your stock of the Common Problems handouts before ordering new.

If you have questions, please contact Debbie Lehman at 512 341-4517 or email her at debbie.lehman@dshs.texas.gov.
Texas WIC News is also available on the Texas WIC website!
http://www.dshs.texas.gov/wichd/gi/wicnews.shtm

next issue:
Guide to Summer

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