

# Family & Consumer News

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Dear Consumers:

We are well into the Spring season and headed toward Summer. May marks the end of the school year and June brings the summer season. Consumer topics of interest for spring are high blood pressure month, dairy foods and food preservation. Contact our office for the latest information on these topics.

Summer brings a shift in gears for our 4-H program. There will be summer day camps, overnight camp at Cherry Lake and Congress for Senior 4-H members. Whether your children are current 4-Hers, you can take advantage of these education programs. Call our office for information.

Sincerely,

Diann Douglas  
Extension Agent IV—CED  
Madison County

## NATIONAL HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE PREVENTION MONTH



If you haven't had your blood pressure checked lately, May is the time to do it. The

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute want every American to have a check. High blood pressure, a silent condition increases your chances of have a heart attack, heart failure, stroke, kidney disease and other life-threatening illnesses.

Anyone can develop high blood pressure, but generally the older you

get or the heavier you get can increase your odds. According to the NHLB, people over age 55 have a 90% chance of developing high blood pressure. Also, people who are overweight or have diabetes are more likely to develop high blood pressure.

The NHLBI has eight tips you can do to prevent and control high blood pressure:

1. Lose weight if you are overweight and maintain a healthy weight. Limit portion sizes, especially of high calorie foods, and try not to over eat.

May/June  
2008

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2. Eat heart healthfully. Follow an eating plan that emphasizes fruits vegetables, and low fat dairy products and is moderate in total fat and low in saturated fat and cholesterol.
  3. Reduce salt and sodium intake. Read food labels to choose canned, processed, and convenience foods that are lower in sodium. Limit sodium intake to no more than 2,400 mg or about 1 teaspoon's worth of salt each day.
  4. If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation. For men, that means a maximum of two drinks a day, for women, a maximum of one.
  5. Become more physically active. Work up to at least 30 minutes of a moderate-level activity, such as brisk walking or bicycling, each day. If you don't have 30 minutes, try to find two 15-minute periods or even three 10-minute periods for physical activity.
  6. Quit smoking. Smoking increases your chances of developing a stroke, heart disease, peripheral arterial disease, and several forms of cancer.
  7. Talk with your health care professional. Ask what your blood pressure numbers are and what they mean.
  8. Take medication as prescribed. If you need to take medication for high blood pressure, make sure you follow your doctor's instructions.
- May is also National Physical Activity Month and the NHBLI suggests five strategies to help you stay physically active.
1. Set a schedule and keep to it.
  2. Get a friend or family member to join you.
  3. Cross-train. Alternate between different activities so as not to strain one part of the body day after day.
  4. Set goals.
  5. Reward yourself. At the end of each month that you stay on your exercise program reward yourself with something.
- For more information on lowering blood pressure and help with becoming more physically active, visit the NHLBI website at [www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov)
- Source: US Dept of Health and Human Service, National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute

## SO EASY TO PRESERVE



Gardens will soon be overflowing with fresh vegetables and it won't be long before summer fruits are ready for picking. Whether you can or freeze, make pickles or jellies, preserving the summer's bounty is easier than you think. Any food preservation method, done correctly, can help you store good

quality food for use all year long.

Home canning has changed greatly since it was introduced more than 170 years ago. Changes arise from scientific research and new technologies have resulted in safer, higher quality products. In recent years, there even been improvements in equipment resulting in newer, safer canning directions.

Pressure canning vegetables and other low acid foods like meat, fish and poultry is still the only safe canning method. I know your grandmother boiled her beans, but you can't kill botulism spores at 212°F and that is the highest temperature you are going to get if you boil a pot all day long. Pressure canners raise the temperature

inside the jars to 240°F, a temperature high enough, over a period of time it will destroy botulism spores. The recommended time is different for each food and jar size.

If you have a pressure canner with a gauge, it needs to be tested each year for accuracy before you begin any canning. We have a gauge tester at the Extension office and you are welcome to call and make an appointment for testing. If we know in advance, we can have the tester ready, and it will not take much time to determine the accuracy of your gauge.

Freezing food is fast and safe. It is more expensive when you consider running a freezer year round. The extreme cold simply retards the growth of microorganisms and slows down the chemical changes that affect the quality and causes food to spoil.

The amount of food you freeze is limited by freezer space. If you only have a refrigerator and freezer combination, you are very limited and

may only freeze a small amount of your favorite fruit or vegetable. If you have a chest or upright freezer, it runs more efficiently if it is at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  full. Use food continuously from the freezer and replace it with other food. The faster the turnover, the lower the operating cost per pound of frozen food.

Jelly and pickles require time, patience and a quality recipe. Too many things can go wrong that result in a less desirable product or even spoilage. Get directions from a reliable preservation source and don't take short cuts.

The Madison County Extension office has complete and accurate instructions for all food preservation procedures. We also have updated video lessons on canning, freezing jelly making, pickling and drying that are available for viewing; these were produced by the University of Georgia Extension. You are welcome to make an appointment to view a lesson of interest to you. For all food preservation information, call or stop by the office.

Source: UF Extension, GA Extension

## TOP 10 REASONS TO EAT MORE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES



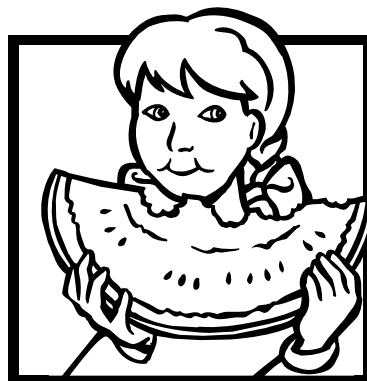
With all of the messages to eat less, there is one food group you need to increase your intake. We used to say 5-A-Day, but now the message is “**More Matters**” Research now shows fruits and vegetables have many beneficial nutrients that reduce your risk of chronic health diseases, so we need to increase our consumption of this food group.

In this day and age of fried fast foods, how do we get kids to eat more fruits and vegetables? The **More Matters** campaign developed a top 10 list of ways you can encourage kids to increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables. Often a child needs to see food, and experience it before it will be acceptable to taste, so the more exposure and experience with food, the more likely it will be eaten. These suggestions work well for adult too! Check out the ideas:

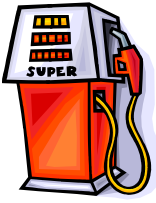
1. **Monster Mash** – Whip up some mashed potatoes and serve as part of a meal.
2. **A Sprinkle a Day** – Sprinkle herbs or other seasoning onto vegetables.
3. **Stir and Spice** — Make applesauce from fresh apples and add cinnamon.
4. **Peel and Slice** – Older children can help with food preparation by peeling and slicing carrots, cucumbers, potatoes. By helping with food preparation, kids are more likely to eat the foods.

5. **Measure Up!** - Let kids measure frozen vegetables before cooking them.
6. **Tear it up!** - Tear lettuce up for salads and sandwiches.
7. **I Spy** – On grocery shopping trips with young children, plan “I Spy” in the produce section. This activity makes food items more familiar to children and they will become more willing to taste when it is served on the table.
8. **Make it Snappy** — Get kids to help snap green beans, snap peas, or break up broccoli. The same idea goes, they are getting more exposure to vegetables.
9. **Pick a peck!** - When shopping, let kids select a new fruit or vegetable to try.
10. **Mean Green Cleaning Machine** – Let kids wash fruits and vegetables when preparing for cooking or eating.

Source: Fruits and Veggies More Matters



## STRATEGIES TO REDUCE THE MONEY YOU SPEND ON GAS



Gas prices are through the roof with no end in sight! Who would have thought prices would be \$4.00 a gallon. These prices weigh heavily on your wallet. Many families are having a tough time purchasing the basic necessities with so much money going to keep gas in the car.

We have no control over prices, but there are things you can do to conserve your fuel usage. Here are a few tips:

- ◆ Keep the tires inflated properly. Under inflated tires burn more fuel and wear out the tires. Also check regularly for alignment and balance.
- ◆ Keep your car tuned up and get regular maintenance. Your car will burn fuel more efficiently.
- ◆ Clean out your trunk, extra

baggage burns more fuel. Carry only the basic emergency equipment and items you really need.

- ◆ Buy the lowest grade of gasoline that is appropriate for your car. Check your owner's manual for this information. As long as your engine doesn't knock or ping, the fuel you're using is fine. You save hundreds of dollars a year.
- ◆ Pay cash at stations that charge extra for credit cards.
- ◆ Don't top off the gas tank. Too much gas will just slosh out.
- ◆ Don't make fast starts or sudden stops. You're just overexerting your engine and will burn extra fuel. Gradual acceleration also helps automatic transmissions run better.
- ◆ Lighten up on the accelerator.

The faster you drive, the more gas you use. Driving 55 mph rather than 65 mph can improve your fuel economy by two miles per gallon.

- ◆ Avoid long warm-ups. Your car doesn't need more than a minute to be ready to go.
- ◆ Combine errands into one trip and plan your stops for the most efficient route. You'll save yourself time and money.
- ◆ Do not rest your foot on the brake. The slightest pressure could cause a drag that will take additional gas use – and wear out the brakes sooner.
- ◆ Tighten up the gas cap. Make sure it's on securely. Buy a new one if your current cap doesn't fit snugly. Gas easily evaporates from the tank if it has an escape.

Source: Bankrate.com

## VACATION IN YOUR OWN BACK YARD



This time of the year, many Floridians are thinking about vacations. Some families have already taken theirs, others have plans for a future time, but still others think they cannot afford a vacation.

There are all kinds of vacations available to the family who uses creative thinking and planning. You don't have to take a luxury boat cruise or go on a wild life safari to have a period of rest and relaxation from the daily toils of the job.

Family financial specialists at the University of Florida/IFAS Extension Service says whether

you have \$50 to \$500 available to fund your family's fun, you can still manage.

Get your family together and make a list of possible vacations. For instance, you may want to consider one or more mini-vacations. If you use your home as a base you can eliminate the cost of over-night lodging. You can minimize food cost by packing a picnic.

Another option some people enjoy visiting friends or relatives in other locations. This practice can extend our travel fund if friends or relative can provide lodging. This arrangement can work very well if you are sensitive to their needs and don't overstay

your welcome. You can also return the favor when your hosts plan a vacation.

The next step is to determine the amount of money available for your vacation. Then calculate your transportation cost. If you have a car that gets fair gasoline mileage you should be able to make a round trip of up to 300 miles for about \$50 in gas. After you have determined the money available for transportation, identify what you can do and see within that limit.

One technique you can use to identify possible mini-vacations is to sit down with a map, pencil and paper and mark your home on the map. Then draw a circle around

your home to represent the distance you can travel on the amount of money available for transportation or the distance you can go and return in one day. Within this circle of say a 50 to 150 miles, make a list of all the vacation, recreation, or historical

spots that you have not visited or would like to visit again. Identify cities within the radius; check maps for areas of special interest. Contact Chambers of Commerce and automobile clubs, or visit your local library for more information on these scenic or recreation spots.

Then rank these in priority order according to places you want most to visit. You will probably be surprised at the number of vacation ideas in your own backyard.

Source: UF/IFAS Extension

## TEN TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR RELATIONSHIP



It's a fact, 50% of American marriages fail. To combat this shocking statistic, the National Extension network has been active in programming in marriage preparation and improving existing marriages.

Learning to communicate effectively can make any day a better day says Charlotte Soup Olsen, Kansas State University Research and Extension family systems specialist. She offers the following suggestion on improving a couple's relationship.

- Be an active listener. Limit distractions. Focus on the person who is speaking to you; make eye contact and be attentive. Try not to interrupt; ask to check signals or paraphrase what is being said – that's not the same as interrupting. If can, in fact, keep a conversation on track. For example, sum up the conversation: "What I hear you saying is..." The speaker may

respond with "Exactly!" and continue; if the speaker says "That's not what I was saying at all," he or she may want to re-define a point.

- Choose an "I" message. This conveys your feelings and can diffuse anger and help keep conflict from escalating. For example, "I'm sorry that you were called back to work" rather than "You spoiled our plan".
- Try not to get stuck on one issue. If a topic is heated, take a time-out. Set a time to discuss the issue, but be sure to allow enough time before the discussion to cool off and think through the issue.
- Try not to table touch issues indefinitely. Do your homework; focus on the facts; be willing to listen intently to the other person's point of view; and be willing to compromise. Compromise makes everyone feel like a winner.
- Try not to nag; recurring issues need resolution, not constant reminders.
- Use humor, but use it carefully. Humor can illustrate a point, ease tension or bring a

group together. Remember, there is a difference between being lighthearted and making a joke that may hurt or offend another person.

- Curb negative thinking and self-talk.
- Think positively.
- Always be kind.
- Be thankful. Thoughtful comments let the other person know they are appreciated.

Learning to be a more effective communicator isn't costly. It just takes practice. It can, however, make life easier for you and for those around you too.

Source: USDA Marriage and Couples Project. Olsen, C. Kansas State University

