

LINK-AGES

Resources and Information for All Families

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February, 2007

February is "Heart Health Month". We hear a lot about heart health but are you aware that heart disease is the number one killer of women? This issue has an article specifically for women about heart disease and the "numbers" that are important to know to help fight it. In addition, to encourage healthy eating for a healthy heart for everyone, there are articles about some foods that are nutritious but also yummy. One of the sponsors of this newsletter is the State Tobacco Education and Prevention Program (STEPP). Every month I

have been including small articles that talk about secondhand smoke. This month, spread throughout the newsletter, are the effects of smoking on the individual. Some are about outward appearances but some are serious to the health of the smoker. Be aware of these little "hints" as you read through, and take them to heart!



Lois Illick,
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7 Super Things Parents and Caregivers Can Do

1. Talk often with your children from the day they are born.
2. Hug them, hold them, and respond to their needs and interests.
3. Listen carefully as your children communicate with you.
4. Read aloud to your children every day, even when they are babies. Play and sing with them often.
5. Say "yes" and "I love you" as much as you say "no" and "don't."
6. Ensure a safe, orderly, and predictable environment, wherever they are.
7. Set limits on their behavior and discipline them calmly, not harshly.

Source: Early Childhood-Head Start Task Force, US Dept. of Education and Health and Human Services.



Secondhand smoke kills

People who have never smoked but live with a smoker have a 15% higher mortality rate than those in smoke-free households, according to a study from New Zealand. Similarly, a European study found that secondhand smoke at home boosts the risk of lung cancer, on average, by 20%. The longer the exposure, the greater the risk.

Source: UC Berkeley Wellness Letter, April 2005.



See Red on Valentine's Day

By Alice Henneman, MS, RD and Extension Educator University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension in Lancaster

See "Red" on Valentine's Day and throughout the year. The Produce for Better Health Foundation (PBH) calls red fruits and vegetables "Red-hot and Healthy." They contain many health-promoting phytochemicals including lycopene and anthocyanins. Some "red" fruits and vegetables include red apples, cherries, cranberries, red grapes, pink/red grapefruit, raspberries, strawberries, watermelon, beets, red cabbage, red peppers, radishes, red onions, rhubarb and tomatoes.

For additional red fruits and vegetables and recipes: Check the PBH Web site at www.5aday.com or visit the National Cancer Institute Web site at www.5aday.gov Some "red" ideas for Valentine's Day (or any day) include:

- Pasta with tomato sauce
- Tossed salad with red bell peppers
- Tossed salad with cherry or grape tomatoes

- Tomato soup
- Cole slaw made with red cabbage
- Cranberry sauce – use that bag of cranberries in your freezer that you bought when they were on sale
- Oatmeal topped with a heart shape made of dried cranberries
- Raspberry smoothie – Put 3/4 to 1 cup plain or vanilla-flavored yogurt in blender. Add a few tablespoons of frozen raspberries at a time and blend until desired consistency. After blending, if desired, blend in 1 or more teaspoons of sugar or artificial sweetener to taste.
- Frozen low fat yogurt or ice cream with "real" strawberry sauce
- Pink/red grapefruit half topped with a sprinkle of brown sugar
- Red grapes as a side dish to your sandwich for noon time nibbling

Talking with Kids: A Parent's Guide to Sex Education

Numbers you should know:

- Nearly two-thirds of parents of 8- to 11-year olds (61%) report that their children initiated the first conversations about the basics of reproduction, according to a Kaiser Foundation/Children Now/Nickelodeon survey.
- In the same survey, two out of five families' discussions about puberty (40%) and HIV/AIDS (38%) also were initiated by the child.
- One-third of 10- and 11-year olds (33%) say that pressure to have sex is a "big problem" for kids their age.

Pointers:

- Communicate Your Values.
- Start Early.
- Initiate Conversations with Your Children.....
- Even about Sex and Relationships.
- Create an Open Environment.
- Listen to Your Child.
- Try to Be Honest.
- Be Patient.
- Use Everyday Opportunities to Talk. (i.e. while viewing a public service TV commercial)
- Talk About it Again. And Again.

Tips for when to teach your children (age appropriate topics):

Elementary School

- The correct names of sexual organs and body parts
- Explaining sex and reproduction
- Pregnancy
- Building healthy relationships
- Setting personal boundaries and respecting others' boundaries

Middle School

- Sexual decision-making
- Emotions and consequences of sexual relationships
- Sexually transmitted diseases

High School

- Dating and relationships
- Sexual decision-making
- Emotions and consequences of sexual relationships
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Contraception

-Excerpted from the National PTA brochure *Talking with Kids: A Parents Guide to Sex Education*, C-2002, available online at www.pta.org/parentinvolvement/healthsafety/index.asp

Baldness: Men who smoke are twice as likely to lose their hair as nonsmokers.



News about Women and Heart Disease

Coronary Heart Disease (CHD) is a very serious disease that affects millions of people every year. CHD includes hypertension or high blood pressure, coronary artery disease and stroke.

Today, heart disease is the leading cause of death in the U.S. Although many people think that this is a disease primarily a problem for men, since 1984 more women than men have died of heart disease. Nearly 336,000 women in America die each year of heart disease yet fewer than half of women are aware that heart disease is the number one killer of women.

Although hereditary can increase a person's risk for heart disease, lifestyle choices are also important to consider. For many people, heart disease can be prevented.

A few changes that can reduce your risk of developing CHD include:

- Stop smoking
- Reduce fat, salt and sugar intake
- Increase whole grain intake
- Lower stress levels/develop positive coping strategies
- Consume no more than one alcoholic drink per day
- Lower waist circumference to less than 35"
- Lower your BMI to 25 or less
- Increase physical activity to 30 minutes or more per day
- Monitor fasting glucose level; should be lower than 100 mg/dL

Take the on-line Learn and Live Quiz at <http://www.americanheart.org>

Know Your Cholesterol Numbers	
Total Cholesterol	
Desirable	< 200 mg/dL
Near Optimal/Above Optimal	200 – 239 mg/dL
High	> 240 mg/dL
LDL Cholesterol	
Optimal	< 100 mg/dL
Above Optimal	100 – 129 mg/dL
Borderline High	130 – 159 mg/dL
High	160 – 189 mg/dL
HDL Cholesterol	
Low	< 40 mg/dL
High ¹	> 60 mg/dL
Triglycerides	
Normal	< 150 mg/dL
Borderline High	150 – 199 mg/dL
High	200 – 499 mg/dL
1An HDL of 60 mg/dL and above is considered protective against heart disease.	

Sources: www.americanheart.org and www.whitehouse.gov
 Source: Colorado State University Cooperative Extension Fact Sheet Diet and Hypertension 9.318 and Source: Colorado State University Cooperative Extension Fact Sheet Cholesterol and Fats 9.319



Know Your Blood Pressure Numbers.			
	SYSTOLIC (MM HG)		DIASTOLIC (MM HG)
Normal	<120	and	<80
Prehypertension	120 – 139	or	80 – 89
HYPERTENSION			
Stage 1	140 – 159	or	90 – 99
Stage 2	≥160	or	≤100

You and Your Gift Cards

Americans spent billions of dollars on gift cards this past holiday season. It's likely at least one showed up in your household. Unlike real cash, gift cards have a way of getting misplaced, forgotten or worse—thrown out with all the wrapping paper!



Hopefully yours are safe in your wallet where you keep all other forms of cash.

Whether you love 'em or wish, like Miss Manners, that they would just go away (she says gift certificates are, "A pathetic compromise convenient to people who do not trust their judgment about selecting the right present for those whose tastes they ought to know"), it's important that you not carry that thing around for the coming months or years. Most gift cards are evaporative and could vanish before you get around to figuring out what to do with them.



Here's the least you need to know about your gift cards and certificates:

1. Your card could be subject to an expiration date. Forget who gets the money if you let it expire (it's complicated and varies by state). Just don't let it happen.
2. Your card may be subject to maintenance fees and dormancy penalties. That is just about the dumbest thing ever. But you have to hand it to the retailers who thought it up to take your money in the event you do not come in quickly enough to make them help you. Again, do not let this happen.
3. You can easily learn the rules that regulate. It's a pain, but find the toll-free number on the back of the card. Call to find out the current value of this card (let's pray no crooks got hold of your



number by jotting it down while your card was on a display rack out in the middle of a store and have now blown through the entire value leaving you with a piece of valueless plastic). While you're at it find out the rules. What happens if you don't spend every last cent of the card's value? Will you get change in real money? What about refunds should you have to return something you purchase with the card? What if you lose the card—will it be replaced provided you have the number? Can you use this card online?

4. You will be tempted to spend more. The National Retail Federation reports that the average gift card recipient coughs up 20% more than the value of the gift card to spend it. Chances are very great this little gift you received is going to cost you dearly. Doesn't make good sense, does it, that someone who cares about you would give you a partial gift—one that requires you to add money to the pot to get the item that will please you the most?

Estimates are in and they indicate about \$80 billion was spent on gift cards for Christmas just past.

But here is the kicker: About ten percent or \$8 billion of those cards will never be redeemed.

What on earth happens to eight billion dollars worth of gift cards? I need to stop thinking about this. And I will. Just as soon as I know your cards are accounted for and fully redeemed.



Be careful out there!

Source: "Everyday Cheapskate" January 2007

Clean Ideas: Rx for Winter Wear

Tips for cleaning and organizing coats, scarves, gloves and boots

Follow these helpful tips:

Take inventory: Do you really need all those scarves and gloves? Are there orphan mittens that need to be separated from the pack? Set them aside and if their mates don't show up by the end of the season, toss them away. Hint: if you have children, visit the lost-and-found box at their school. You may be astounded at what you find!

Get a peg up: Getting kids to hang their coats in the closet can be a losing battle. Plus, you don't want wet coats crammed in next to dry ones. Pegs are easy for everyone to use and provide space for garments to air out and thoroughly dry. Be sure some of the pegs are installed at child-friendly heights.

Divide and conquer: Do everyone's winter accessories get all jumbled together? How about some canvas bags, one for each family member and clearly labeled with his/her name? Hang the bags on pegs. If they're wet, hats and scarves can hang on the peg until dry; then it's into their owner's bag. Mittens and gloves too!

Bin there: Bins are another way to store gloves, scarves and hats. People are more likely to use them if there's no lid to open and close. Clear plastic bins or wire baskets let you easily see what's inside, particularly useful when you have to grab and go!

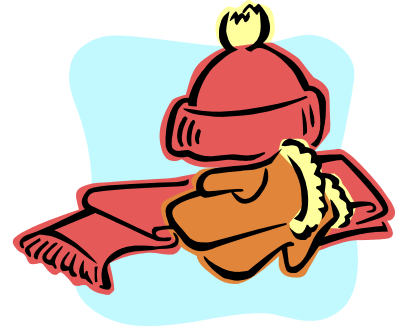
Clean up: Hats, mittens and scarves should be washed frequently during the season. Read and follow manufacturer's instructions on the care labels. If the care labels have

disappeared (as frequently happens on mittens), machine wash in cold water on the gentle cycle and line dry.

Coat check: For coats and jackets, a mid-season cleaning is a good idea, even if you can't see the dirt. Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions on the care labels. "Dry clean only" garments go to the drycleaners. For washable garments, check the pockets, zip the zippers and close the hook-and-loop fasteners so they don't catch bits of lint and thread during laundering, or snag other fabrics.

Boot camp: A boot scraper by the door prevents dirt and grime from being tracked inside. A boot tray is a good way to give wet boots a place to dry without having water puddle up the floor.

Source: Soap and Detergent Association 2007



Q: Why can't I use regular dishwashing liquid in my dishwasher?

A: Hand dishwashing detergent isn't formulated to work in automatic dishwashers. The suds created by this type of detergent would interfere with the mechanical action of the dishwasher. They would smother the water action that's necessary for effective cleaning, so you'd end up with dirty dishes. Suds can also cause your dishwasher to overflow and you could end up with soap suds all over your floor.

Source: Soap and Detergent Association 2007



Wrinkles: Long-term smokers have thinner, less elastic skin than nonsmokers, so they're more likely to develop serious premature wrinkling and other signs of aging.

Bean Appetit!

By Sheila Barry, El Paso County Cooperative Extension

Whether you prefer kidney, red, navy, great northern, black, lima, cranberry, pinto or garbanzo, beans are an inexpensive and nutritious food source that can add variety to soups, casseroles, salads and desserts.

The Balanced Bean

Beans are a highly nutritious source of vitamins, minerals, protein and complex carbohydrates.

Fiber-the soluble fiber in beans helps carry cholesterol out of the body, reducing the risk of heart disease. It may also help prevent blood sugar levels from rising to rapidly after eating, making it easier to control glucose levels.

B Vitamins- the folate in beans may help to lower homocysteine levels in the blood and further the prevention of heart disease. In addition, it plays an important role in preventing birth defects. Thiamin is necessary for the release of energy and brain cell function, possibly even helping to reduce the risk of Alzheimer's Disease.

Minerals- Beans, per cup, are a good source of Calcium, Magnesium, Potassium and Iron. Calcium is needed to maintain bone strength. Magnesium is needed for muscle and nerve function and aids in calcium absorption. Potassium may help to lower blood pressure and iron is necessary for healthy blood. They are also a source of Molybdenum which is necessary for enzymes.

Protein- Combining beans with whole wheat pasta or brown rice makes a complete protein that is lower in calories and contains no saturated fat or cholesterol.

For example, at just pennies per 1/2 cup serving pinto beans offer a mere 118 calories, 7 grams of protein, 7 grams of dietary fiber, 41 mg. of calcium, 147 mcg of folate, 2.23 mg of iron, and 400 mg of potassium all with only .5 grams of fat and 2 mg of sodium.

Bean Basics

Purchase beans from a store with good product turnover to ensure freshness since older beans will be more difficult to cook. Start by sorting and rinsing beans and then presoak them before cooking to shorten the cooking time and ease digestion.

Presoak: For every 1 cup of dried beans, cover with 2-3 cups of water. You may boil the beans for 2 minutes and then allow them to stand for an hour covered in the hot liquid. You could also soak beans overnight. It is important that you drain the water. Then, replace with 3 cups of fresh water or broth for every 1 cup of dried beans.

Cook: Simmer beans on the stove or cook in a pressure cooker. Times will vary depending on variety. Remember that you may need to add time for our high altitude. Do not add salt or acidic ingredients such as tomatoes or vinegar until the end of the cooking time since they may prevent the beans from becoming tender.

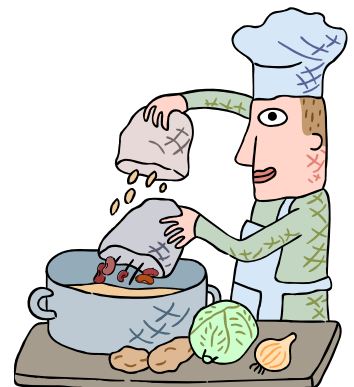
Use Your Bean

- 1 lb. of dry beans yields approximately 6 cups of cooked beans, drained.
1 cup of dry beans yields approximately 3 cups of cooked beans, drained.

Canned beans are often just as nutritious as freshly cooked beans and are a convenient way to quickly add beans to your favorite dish by simply draining, rinsing and using. Look for canned beans that are lower in sodium.

Source:

www.americanbean.org;
mypyramid.gov;
www.whfoods.com



Recipe-Bean "Surprise" Cake



Surprise your Valentine this year with this delicious bean cake...

Won't you bean mine?

Bean "Surprise" Cake

- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 2 cups pinto beans, cooked and mashed or 1-15 oz. can of pinto beans, drained
- 2 cups flour
- 1/2 tsp. salt (may omit if using canned beans)
- 1 tsp. Baking soda
- 1 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 3/4 cup applesauce
- 1 1/2 tsp. vanilla

In a large bowl, beat oil, brown sugar, eggs and beans. In a medium bowl, combine flour, salt, baking soda and cinnamon mix well and add to bean mixture. Stir in applesauce and vanilla. Spread evenly into a 9x13" pan or pour into a bundt pan. Bake at 350 F for 35-45 minutes or until toothpick comes out clean.

Top with powdered sugar or your favorite frosting.
Yields 20 servings

Nutrition Information: Per Serving

160 calories, 3.5 grams of fat, 0 grams saturated fat, 20 mg. cholesterol, 190 mg. sodium, 28 grams carbohydrates, 2 grams dietary fiber, 3 grams protein, 2% calcium, 8% iron. Recipe Source: EFNEP

Source: El Paso County Cooperative Extension, Sheila Barry Family and Consumer agent



Master Food Safety Advisor Training

Become a **Master Food Safety Advisor** and learn all the ins and outs of food preservation and food safety. Classes will be held in El Paso County starting **Thursday, May 3rd** and continuing on Thursdays through **June 21st**. Required volunteer hours are scheduled in the county you live in. Please consider this opportunity to both learn and to help others learn safe food handling. Call the El Paso County office to register (719-636-8920). For questions about volunteering call Lois Illick 583-6566 at the Pueblo County Cooperative Extension Office.

New Autism Group Formed

A group of parents has started an informational and support group centered around autism. There will be two meetings every month. The first Monday of every month will be for education/training during the day. The third Friday of the month will be in the evening for discussion of topics of interest and networking for parents. If you are interested in knowing more about the condition or have a child that has been diagnosed with autism, plan to attend the next meeting on February 16th at 6 p.m. Contact Kathy Aguilar at Highland Park Elementary (549-7560) for more information.

Root canal infections: Smokers are 70% more likely to need treatment for root canal infections than non-smokers, according to a new study in the *Journal of Dental Research*.

Tooth loss: Research has found that smokers are twice as likely to lose their teeth, since smoking contributes to periodontal disease. Pack-a-day smokers can expect to lose an extra tooth per decade.

Resources and Information for All Families

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Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division

**National Extension Association of
Family and Consumer Sciences (NEAFCS)
Western Region 3rd Place Finalist
for Newsletters**

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Tax Breaks Aren't Just for the Rich



A community service of The Piton Foundation and 211 Colorado

Dial 211 (it's a free call) to learn about tax credits for working families and to find help filing your taxes

If you make less than about \$38,000 and have children at home, the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit can help you keep more of the money you work so hard to earn. If you qualify, you owe less in taxes and may even get hundreds or thousands of dollars back and these tax credits do **not** count as income for public benefits.

Keep more of your refund: Don't pay more than you have to for filing your taxes!

- If you use a paid preparer, don't be tempted by "instant refunds." You're paying way too much to borrow your own money!
- Have your taxes done at a free tax preparation site near you.
- Complete your own tax forms using free on-line tax preparation and electronic filing.

Bottom line: Smoking harms nearly every organ or function of the body.