

March is National Nutrition Month®

March is National Nutrition Month®, an education and information campaign created annually by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. The campaign focuses on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits. This awareness campaign was initiated in March 1973 as a week-long event, "National Nutrition Week," and then became a month-long observance in 1980 in response to growing public interest in nutrition. The theme of this year's campaign is "Put Your Best Fork Forward" which serves as a reminder that each one of us holds the tool to make healthier food choices.

Rates of chronic diseases—many of which are related to poor quality diet and physical inactivity—have increased. About half of all American adults have one or more preventable, diet-related chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, being overweight and obesity. However, a large body of evidence now shows that healthy eating patterns and regular physical activity can help individuals achieve and maintain good health and reduce their risk of chronic

disease throughout all stages of their lifespan. Making small changes during National Nutrition Month® and over time, helps improve health now and into the future.

Every 5 years, the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and of Agriculture (USDA) must jointly publish a report containing nutritional and dietary information and guidelines for the general public. The 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines offer building blocks for a healthy lifestyle with recommendations to help Americans throughout all stages of their lifespan make choices that add up to an overall healthy eating pattern. To build a healthy eating pattern, individuals should combine healthy choices from across all food groups—while paying attention to calorie limits, too. Adopting these recommendations help to promote overall health and help prevent chronic disease.

The key recommendation of the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines is for individuals to consume a healthy eating pattern of foods and beverages within an appropriate calorie level. A healthy eating pattern includes:

- A variety of vegetables from all of the subgroups—dark green, red and orange, legumes (beans and peas), starchy and other
- Fruits, especially whole fruits
- Grains, at least half of which are whole grains
- Fat-free or low-fat dairy, including milk, yogurt, cheese, and/or fortified soy beverages
- A variety of protein foods, including seafood, lean meats and poultry, eggs, legumes (beans and peas), nuts, seeds, and soy products.
- Oils including canola, corn, olive, peanut, sunflower and soybean.

The 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines also recommend:

- Consuming less than 10 percent of your calories per day from added sugars
- Consuming less than 10 percent of your calories per day from saturated fats
- Consuming less than 2,300 milligrams per day of sodium
- Consuming as little dietary cholesterol as possible while following a healthy eating pattern

 If alcohol is consumed, it should be consumed in moderation — up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men and only by adults of legal drinking age.

Individuals are exceeding limits for added sugars, saturated fats and sodium. Healthy dietary choices include individuals slowly cutting back on food and beverages higher in these dietary components. For example, individuals can drink water instead of a soda or season food with lemon, herbs and spices instead of salt.

In addition to consuming a healthy eating pattern, regular physical activity is one of the most important things individuals can do to improve their health. The 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines remind adults to include at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity each week and to perform muscle strengthening exercises at least twice a week. Youth ages 6 to 17 years need at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day, including aerobic, musclestrengthening, and bone-strengthening activities. Just as individuals can achieve a healthy eating pattern in a variety of ways that meet their personal and cultural preferences, they can engage in regular physical activity in a variety of ways throughout the day and by choosing activities they enjoy. Individuals can find an activity they like such as a brisk walk/run or attending a fitness class like spinning or yoga.

For further nutrition assistance, individuals can also consult a registered dietitian to help interpret and apply the Dietary Guidelines in their daily life.

To apply this year's theme of "Put Your Best Fork Forward," during National Nutrition Month® and throughout the year, individuals can make their calories count by thinking nutrient-rich rather than "good" or "bad" foods. The majority of food choices should be packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutrients, and lower in calories. Making smart food choices can help individuals stay healthy, manage their weight and be physically active.

The website of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics includes helpful articles, recipes, videos and educational resources to spread the message of good nutrition and an overall healthy lifestyle for people of all ages, genders and backgrounds. For additional information and for more information on the availability of the National Nutrition Month 2017toolkit to promote this

awareness month, visit http://www.eatright.org/resources/national-nutrition-month.

Attached is nutrition information that you can network to your contacts.

For more information on the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, visit www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/

Please feel free to review the Bergen-Hudson Chronic Disease Coalition website: http://www.co.bergen.nj.us/index.aspx?nid=390.

Please spread the word about National Nutrition Month® and make a commitment to promote healthy lifestyles and help to prevent chronic disease through good nutrition and increased physical activity.