

Mealtime Memo

for Child Care

What's the Food Message?

The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, 2010 has a new message. The message emphasizes the following key food points:

- eat more whole grains,
- increase fruits and vegetables,
- increase milk products, and
- choose a variety of proteins.

Eat more whole grains.

At least half of all grains should be whole grains. But what is a grain? Grain products are divided into 2 groups, whole grains, and refined grains. Whole grains contain the entire grain kernel—the bran, germ, and endosperm. Whole grains will often times have the word, “whole”, listed on the ingredient list. Examples of whole grains include whole wheat bread, whole wheat flour, brown rice, oatmeal, bulgur, whole wheat tortillas, and whole grain barley. Look for foods with whole grains listed as the first ingredient on the ingredient list. Read Nutrition Facts Labels carefully. Foods labeled with the words, “100% wheat”, “stone –ground”, “seven grain”, and “multi-grain” are usually not whole grain foods. Just because it is brown bread does not mean that it is a whole-grain product.

Refined grains do not contain the entire grain kernel; the bran and germ have been removed during the milling process. This removal of the bran and germ also removes many of the vitamins and minerals from the product. Most refined grains are enriched, which means that certain B vitamins and iron are added back after processing. Examples of refined grains include wheat bread, wheat flour, flour tortillas, white rice, grits, white bread, white rolls, and cornbread. Whole grain products are a good source of many important nutrients. Whole grains provide the body with several B vitamins (riboflavin, thiamin, niacin, folate), and minerals (iron, magnesium, selenium), and dietary fiber.



Increase variety of vegetables.

Vegetables are divided into 5 groups:

- dark green vegetables,
- orange vegetables,
- dry beans and peas,
- starchy vegetables,
- and other vegetables.



Each group provides its' own unique blend of nutrients. Dark green vegetables include broccoli, collard greens, mustard greens, spinach, and romaine lettuce. Orange vegetables include carrots, sweet potatoes, and pumpkin. Dry beans and peas include a wide variety of vegetables such as pinto beans, black-eyed peas, kidney beans, lentils, and white beans. Starchy vegetables include corn, potatoes, and green peas. Other vegetables include green beans, celery, cabbage, tomatoes, cauliflower, and zucchini. Vegetables are a good source of many nutrients including potassium, folate (folic acid), dietary fiber, vitamin A, vitamin E, and vitamin C.

Increase fruit intake.

Offer fruit fresh, canned, frozen, or dried. Limit juice consumption. Offer a wide variety of fruits daily, common, and uncommon varieties. Examples of fruits include apricots, apples, strawberries, raspberries, kiwi fruit, mangoes, grapes, watermelon, peaches, tangerines, papaya, and oranges. Expose children to new fruits on a regular basis. Keep fruit handy and visible to increase consumption. Fruits are a good source of many nutrients to include potassium, Vitamin C, dietary fiber, and folate (folic acid).



Increase milk products.

Increase intake of milk products and fat-free or low-fat milk. All fluid milk products and many foods made from milk are included in this category. Examples include low fat milk, skim milk, soy beverages, hard natural



cheeses, soft cheeses, and yogurt. Choose low fat calcium-rich foods that meet your calorie needs. If you are lactose intolerant, lactose free or lactose reduced, milk products are available.

Milk products provide many nutrients such as calcium, potassium, and vitamin D. Milk consumption is linked to improving bone health and reducing teeth decay in children. Children age 2-3 years old should consume at least 2 cups of low-fat or fat-free milk and milk products each day. Children aged 4-8 years old should consume at least 2½ cups of low-fat or fat-free milk and milk products per day.

Choose a variety of proteins. Foods in this group include meats, eggs, poultry, seafood, and soy products. Dry beans and peas (black beans, pinto beans, lentils, etc.) are part of this group as well as the vegetable group. Nuts and seeds such as almonds, peanuts, and cashews also provide protein in the diet. Choose lean protein sources to limit your fat and cholesterol intake. Protein foods provide a wide variety of nutrients to include protein, B vitamins (niacin, thiamin, riboflavin, and B6), vitamin E, iron, magnesium, and zinc. Remember to replace higher solid fats with lower solid fats and calories. Also replace solid fats with oils when possible.

How much food do you need from each food group? It depends on your age, sex, and physical activity level. What counts as a serving from each food group? What are the health benefits from consuming foods from each food group? You can learn the answers to these questions and more from the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010*. Here you will find a wealth of nutrition information at your fingertips.

Sources

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture. *The Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010*. Retrieved June 30, 2011, from <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/DGAs2010-PolicyDocument.htm>.