



December 2007 – Blaine County Cooperative Extension Service, 212 N. Weigle, Watonga, OK 73772 580.623.5195

Email: blaineco@watonga.com

Healthy eating plan can fit into holiday schedule

Food is one of the pleasures of the holiday season. Just because a person is trying to maintain a healthy eating plan does not mean holiday parties should be avoided.

The secret to fitting a healthy eating plan into holiday festivities is moderation and balance, said Janice Hermann, Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension Service nutrition education specialist.

“It’s not a good idea to go on a ‘diet’ during the holidays. You’re simply setting yourself up for disappointment,” Hermann said. “Instead of trying to lose weight, just try to maintain your weight. Also, if you know you’ll be attending a party later in the evening, try eating lower-calorie meals earlier during the day. This way you can enjoy the party foods without overdoing your calorie intake for the day.”

Hermann also suggests eating a small, low-fat snack such as fruit or a bagel before heading out to a holiday party. This will help take the edge off your hunger and help you maintain your willpower.

Once you arrive at the buffet, do not head straight for the food tables. Take some time to greet the host or hostess and mingle with friends.

“You should also get something to drink and settle into the festivities before eating,” she said. “Avoid drinks containing alcohol because they are just empty calories. Opt instead for a glass of sparkling water with lemon. This drink contains zero calories and is light and refreshing.”

To avoid unconscious nibbling, socialize away from the buffet table. Conversation can take your attention away from the food and can easily lead to over indulging.

Although the array of holiday foods may be tempting, make just one trip to the buffet table. Make sure to choose the foods you really want and keep portions small. In addition, choose some lower-calorie foods such as raw vegetables or fresh fruit.

Hermann said broiled shrimp with cocktail sauce or lemon is a good choice. Go easy on fried

appetizers, cheese cubes or other “not-so-healthy” choices.

“If possible, bring a healthy dish of your own, but be sure to check with the hostess first,” she said.

In party situations that involve a sit-down dinner versus a buffet, make your first helping small. That way if you do take second, the total amount should be about the same as a normal portion size.

Hermann said one of the key things to keep in mind is holiday foods and parties are not an all-or-nothing situation. Do not deprive yourself of special holiday foods or feel guilty when you eat them.

“When it comes to planning your own holiday parties and meals, make substitutions that will lower the fat content of your food selections,” she said. “Your guests probably won’t know the difference. However, if you have a special holiday food that just wouldn’t be the same prepared any other way, simply prepare it as you would normally and take a smaller portion. Sometimes just a taste can satisfy your craving.”

For those who find that they have over indulged at a party, step up the exercise. Try to get at least 30 minutes of vigorous physical activity on most days of the week.

“Be sure to keep in mind that sharing food is part of the holidays. Enjoying holiday meals or parties with family and friends doesn’t mean you have to abandon your healthy food habits,” Hermann said.

Holiday Bazaar & Santa's Village

Thanks to everyone who helped in so many ways at the recent Bazaar and Village. Especially to everyone who brought items to the 'new' Country Store. \$350 was raised during the day towards our High School Scholarship fund. Thanks for all of your assistance. Over 300 photos with Santa were taken and the majority of vendors commented on having a 'good' day.

HCE Leader Lesson Reminder

Your January meeting lesson materials are ready for pick up in the Extension Office. Topic is "Memory Improvement". The yearbooks will be ready by the end of the year.

Our lesson for February will be presented on Thursday, January 31st at 10:00 a.m. at the Blaine County Fairgrounds (this is a date change due to a required in-service on the regular date). Our topic is "Cheeses and How to Use Them".

Following the lesson on the January 31st, we will have an OHCE Executive meeting to plan for Spring Association meeting and other items of business. Please have at least one member from each group in attendance.

Awards Reports

It is now time to be submitting awards application for the completed 2007 OHCE program year. Applications should be turned in by January 25th for Member of the Year, Rookie Member, Young Member and Heart of OHCE. Forms for these applications will be available when you pick up the lesson. Achievement Scoresheets are also due on January 25th.

Are High Energy Costs Burning You Up? Try a Portable Space Heater

Rising home heating costs has driven many homeowners to be more conscientious about conserving energy. Now, with winter upon us, the question of how to stay warm and cut utility bills at the same time has taken on even more urgency.

One possible solution: portable space heaters. Reasonably priced (\$15-\$100) and relatively inexpensive to run, they provide

concentrated heat in one spot so you can keep the thermostat lower in the rest of the home. A 1500-watt heater, enough to warm an average-sized room, can keep you comfortably toasty throughout the chilly winter season while delivering considerable energy savings. (Lowering the thermostat from 70 degrees to 65 degrees F can save about 25% on home heating costs, depending on where you live.)

Are They Right for You?

Portable heaters are recommended, particularly if you spend a lot of time in one area of the house, or if you occasionally need one to warm up a chilly room. But if you or other family members are moving throughout the house across a number of different rooms, the use of portable heaters is not the answer for you.

Radiant vs. Convection

There are two kinds of portable electric heaters, radiant and convection.

Radiant heaters work like bathroom heat lamps; they generate infrared radiation that warms people or objects (floors, walls, desks) directly within their beam. They work best in places like garages and workshops.

Convection heaters warm the air in the room either by natural convection or by blowing air over a hot element with a fan. Some feature a convenient thermostat that automatically switches the heater on if the room starts to cool. There are three different types:

- **Ceramic convection heaters** are small, very portable, and have relatively low operating temperatures.
- **Wire element heaters**, with their efficient air circulation, typically heat up a room quickly.
- **Radiator-style oil or water-filled heaters** are quiet (no fan), and are equipped with wheels for easy movement. They continue to radiate heat even in their off-cycle.

Keep It Safe

Because portable heaters contain a heating element, they can be dangerous if used carelessly. Please keep in mind the following tips to ensure safe and trouble-free operation.

- ❖ **Location:** Always place the heater on a flat, non-flammable surface (i.e., no rugs or carpets) away from steady traffic. Keep kids

and pets away, and make sure all flammable material (bedding, drapes, furniture, clothes) is at least three feet away. Never use them to dry things off.

- ❖ **No Tipping:** Make sure your heater has all the latest safety features, like an automatic cut-off switch that prevents fires by shutting it off if it tips over, and more guarding around the heating coils.
- ❖ **Approved Safety:** Like all appliances, your portable heater should be UL or CSA approved, which is your assurance it's been properly tested.
- ❖ **Supervision:** Never use a portable heater when sleeping, or leave one unattended when you leave the house, even to run a quick errand.
- ❖ **Extensions:** Don't use an extension cord unless you absolutely have to, in which case read the Owner's Manual to learn the proper gauge and type.

Source: Leviton Institute Newsletter Fall '07

Cold and Flu

How to avoid spreading germs

The cold and flu season has just begun. And if you haven't had your first "achoo!" attack, consider yourself lucky. Adults can expect to get anywhere from two to four colds before the season ends in April, while children may get as many as 10 colds each year. Incidents of flu are less frequent, striking only 5 to 20 percent of the population. Although your chances of contracting the flu are fewer, the complications that may ensue, such as pneumonia and dehydration, are more serious.

Germs in the Workplace & in the Public

The office is a hotbed of germs that cause colds and flu. Think about all the surfaces that everyone touches, such as doorknobs, microwave and refrigerator handles, elevator buttons, stair rails, the copy machine, and the coffee pot. Then there are the office mates who use your phone, borrow your pen, or sit down at your computer to check their e-mail or visit a website. And let's not forget the compulsory handshake that's part of daily business etiquette.

People with colds typically carry the virus on their hands. If those hands aren't washed properly, the

viruses can stay alive for at least two hours, moving from hands to other surfaces, just waiting to attract another set of hands. Frequent handwashing is the number-one way to avoid spreading these viruses. This means washing your hands for at least 15-20 seconds, using soap and warm running water. For added protection, turn off the faucet with a paper towel. Dry your hands with an air dryer or clean paper towel. Use a paper towel to open the bathroom door; dispose of it in a trash bin outside the door.

Keep an alcohol-based hand sanitizer at your desk or in your purse for convenient hand cleaning. A packet of disinfectant wipes will come in handy for removing germs from the telephone receiver, computer keyboard, and the like. A recent study by UNC Hospitals in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, showed that cleaning a surface with a disinfectant wipe for just five seconds was 95-100% effective in getting rid of germs.

If you are the person with the cold, be considerate of others. Sneeze and cough into a tissue, throw the tissue away, and then wash your hands. If a sneeze or cough takes you by surprise, use your shoulder or your elbow as a shield, rather than your hand.

After-Five Strategies for Staying Healthy

- **Get plenty of rest.** Most people need seven to nine hours of sleep.
- **Eat a balanced diet, and exercise.** Along with getting enough sleep, these healthy habits can help the immune system fend off cold and flu viruses.
- **Get a flu shot.**
- **Avoid contact with known allergens.** Allergies affecting the nose or throat may increase the chances of getting a cold or flu.
- **Quit smoking; avoid secondhand smoke.** Because smoking interferes with the mechanisms that keep bacteria and debris out of the lungs, those who use tobacco or who are exposed to secondhand smoke are more prone to respiratory illnesses and more severe complications than nonsmokers.

Finally, if you are sick, stay home. There's nothing heroic about coming into the office and sharing your germs with everyone else!

Source: www.cleaning101.com

Generators – Good Blackout Insurance

More and more people are choosing to have a portable generator on hand as a power source during power failure. Generators are available in sizes ranging from small gasoline-powered models for the home, to powerful natural gas or diesel units rated for commercial or industrial use. But before you rush out to buy one, there are some things that the Leviton Institute recommends you keep in mind.

Watts Up?

The first thing to do is determine what size generator is right for you. First, make a list of appliances and lights that are absolutely essential to keep running in the event of power failure. Then add up their total wattage. Keep in mind that motor-driven appliances like refrigerators or freezers need four times as much power to start as they do to run, so be sure your generator can provide that extra wattage.

For example, if a refrigerator is rated at 400 watts, it will require 1600 watts to start; starting with less wattage could damage or burn out the motor. If you're running a refrigerator and freezer that might start at the same time, then you must add both their wattages and multiply that amount by four to be on the safe side, then select the generator with the nearest higher rating.

Generator Do's and Don'ts

DO plug appliances directly into the generator if possible, or use an outdoor, heavy-duty extension cord rated no less than the wattage of the sum of all connected appliances (wattage = amperage x 125 volts). You can also have a qualified electrician connect a generator directly to your house wiring according to local electrical codes, or find out from your local utility company about installing a power transfer switch.

DON'T try to power up your house by plugging the generator directly into a wall outlet, or "backfeeding." This dangerous practice not only endangers you by bypassing protection circuits in your own house, it also threatens neighbors connected to the same transfer, as well as utility workers who are working in the area.

DO prevent shock or electrocution by keeping the generator dry and out of the rain (erect a canopy over it if necessary).

DON'T use a portable generator indoors. They product carbon monoxide (CO) which can

quickly build up to poisonous levels in enclosed or partially enclosed area. Symptoms include weakness, dizziness, sickness or nausea; if you experience any of these, get some fresh air immediately. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), at least 228 CO poisoning deaths were caused by portable generators between 1990 and 2003.

DO place the generator far away enough from the house to prevent CO from coming indoors, and just to be on the safe side, be sure to install CO alarms (with battery backup) in your house when using a generator.

DON'T store fuel such as gasoline or kerosene in your house, or near a fuel-burning appliance like a water heater in an enclosed area like a garage.

DO let a generator cool down before refilling the fuel tank; spilled gasoline could ignite on a hot generator.

Source: Leviton Institute Newsletter, Fall '07

This newsletter is one way of communicating educational information to the citizens of Blaine County in the area of Family & Consumer Sciences. For free subscriptions, contact the Extension Office at 580.623.5195.

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Editor,
Joy Rhodes
Extension Educator-FCS/4-H