



# Healthy, Happy Families

Texas Cooperative Extension - Rockwall County

Family & Consumer Sciences Newsletter ~ Summer, 2005

## Programs of the Month for Summer

The Programs of the Month held at the Rockwall County Library are proving to be educational and fun! The Lunch and Learn Series is taught on the third Thursday each month from **12:00 noon until 1:00 p.m.** Activities at the beginning of the program and at the end are planned to give people coming from work the time to get to the program and then get back to work. Bring a brown bag lunch.

**July 21 - Culinary Herbs** - If you can grow a weed; you can grow your own herb garden. Give it a try and experience great success even with a few basic herbs grown in containers. You need some sun, some dirt and some water. See, touch and smell a wide variety of available herbs and then get started on your own. Cooking with herbs and recipes using fresh herbs will also be shared.

**August 18 - Portion Distortion** - Think about it . . . getting more food for our dollar could be wasteful! Americans love bargains and good deals on foods. Find out how our meals have grown and what this distortion is doing to our general health and well being. Learn ways to control serving/portion sizes at home and while eating out.

**September 15 - Lunch on the Go** - It's back to school time! Learn how to pack a safe and healthy brown bag lunch for students; as well as for those of us who work. Tips for choosing healthy meals when eating lunch out will also be presented.

## Ten Water Smart Tips



Water is something most of us take for granted.

We all need to remember that water is a vital resource that

may at times be limited.

This summer looks like it is going to be a scorcher—so follow these tips for a lower water bill.

1. Water only when your lawn needs it.
2. Give your lawn a long drink when you water.
3. Apply water to your lawn as evenly as possible.
4. Water outside early in the morning.
5. Check faucets for drips and leaks.
6. Wash only full loads of laundry.
7. Turn off water when you shave, brush teeth, etc.
8. Wash only full loads of dishes in the dishwasher.
9. Wipe up small spills as they occur to avoid frequent mopping of floors.
10. Use a broom, not the hose, to clean the garage floor, the sidewalks and the driveway.

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# Living Well

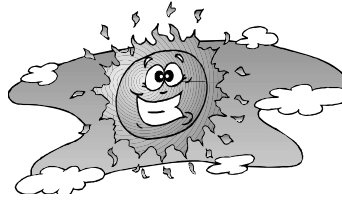
- Raising Kids
- Eating Right
- Spending Smart
- Living Well

Information & education at your fingertips to help you live well. Families across the United States turn to the Cooperative Extension system for research based, non-biased information and education.

## Beat the Heat

Whether you are out in the pool, on the lake trying to stay cool, or enjoying the summer sunshine out in the back-yard; it is important to be sure you protect your and your family from the damaging effects UV radiation from the sun can have on the skin; including sunburn, skin cancer, and the premature aging of skin. The following guidelines can help:

- The best way to protect against the sun is to cover up. Wear a hat, sunglasses, and cotton clothing with a tight weave.
- Stay in the shade whenever possible – particularly try to avoid hot sun exposure during peak hours from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- Keep babies under 6 months of age out of direct sunlight. Get under a shade tree, an umbrella, or a stroller canopy.
- Dress babies in lightweight clothing that covers the arms and legs, and use a brimmed hat.
- Use a sunscreen with a SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 15, even on cloudy days.
  - Apply sunscreen at least 30 minutes before going outside and before putting on clothes to allow it to dry and avoid rubbing off.
  - Reapply sunscreen every 1 to 2 hours during regular activity and every 30 minutes if swimming or sweating heavily.



## Storage Tips for Summer Produce

**Apples** - Store in a cool, dry place or in the refrigerator. Apples may seem crisper when they are chilled.

**Artichokes** - Refrigerate.

**Asparagus** - Store unwashed, standing the stalks upright in an inch of water and cover with a plastic bag. Or, wrap the stem ends in a wet paper towel and seal in a plastic bag.

**Avocados** - If not soft, then ripen in a warm, humid place. Do not refrigerate unless it is necessary (when ripe).

**Bell Peppers** - Refrigerate or store in cool, moist area.

**Broccoli** - Refrigerate unwashed in closed plastic bag.

**Cabbage** - Refrigerate in closed plastic bag.

**Carrots** - Remove tops, wash. Refrigerate in closed plastic bag. If your carrots get limp,

you can refresh them by soaking them in ice water for 30 minutes.

**Celery** - Store washed in a closed plastic bag. Celery is susceptible to freezing so don't store in the back of the refrigerator where it is coolest.

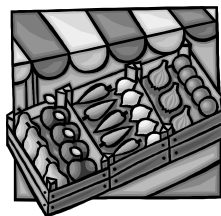
**Corn** - Refrigerate if unable to use right away. Do not husk until ready to cook.

**Garlic** - Store whole bulbs in an open container away from heat and light.

**Lettuce** - Keep lettuce in a plastic bag or covered container with a paper towel to absorb any extra moisture.

**Mushrooms** - Put in a paper bag in your refrigerator.

**Onions** - Store uncut



onions in a cool, dry place with good air circulation (1 month). Once onions are cut, wrap them in plastic and store in the refrigerator (3 days).

**Oranges** - Room temperature (3-4 days) or refrigerate (2-3 weeks).

**Pears** - Ripen at room temperature, then refrigerate, unwashed.

**Spinach** - Refrigerate spinach in plastic bag.

**Strawberries** - If the berries still have green "caps" they may taste sour. Discard any bruised berries. Refrigerate. Wash just before serving. Very perishable.

**Tomatoes** - Tomatoes lose flavor when stored in the refrigerator. Store them instead in a cool cupboard. They will keep longer if stored stem side down.

## Bye, Bye Germs ~ Cleaning Help for New Parents

Germs are definitely not welcome in the nursery! Because babies do not have fully developed immune systems, they are vulnerable to illness. First time moms and dads may be especially anxious about the best ways to keep germs and bacteria away. Here are easy cleaning tips for new parents!

**Wash your hands.** This is one of the most effective ways to avoid spreading germs. It is especially important after

changing a diaper, after using the bath room, and before and after preparing an infant's food.

**Use a disinfectant.** This is a fast and effective way to clean up after a baby, while combating germs on surfaces like the high chair, diaper changing table and diaper pail. Be sure to follow directions on the product label.

**Take wipes along.** Disinfectant wipes

are a boon to parents on the go. They are easy for spot cleaning strollers and car seats. But, please remember that these wipes are for disinfecting hard surfaces. They are not to be used on baby's soft skin.

As always, keep household cleaning products out of reach of children. Close cleaning product containers securely and lock products up.

# Asthma Myths Unmasked

Did you know by that the year 2020, an estimated 29 million Americans will have asthma? This chronic condition is our nation's most common and costliest disease. Let's dispel some common myths about asthma.

**Myth: Having asthma means your home is dirty.** **Fact:** Having asthma does not mean your home is dirty, but it could mean that you might react to asthma "triggers" in your home. Even the cleanest-looking home can harbor dust mites, animal dander, mold and mildew, cockroaches and their droppings, and pollen that filter in from outdoors – all common asthma triggers.

One particularly big offender to asthma

sufferers are dust mites, microscopic creatures that feed on human skin flakes. Preventive measures include: vacuuming at least once a week, regular dusting, and weekly washing of bed linens. Special covers that protect mattresses and pillows from dust mite re-infestation are another solution.

**Myth: Asthma is uncomfortable but not serious.** **Fact:** Asthma is serious, it can be life-threatening. Young children are at the greatest risk. Asthma is the most common chronic childhood disease in the U.S., affecting more than one child in 20. It accounts for one in six of all pediatric emergency visits in the U.S. and causes nearly 90,000 hospitalizations each year.

**Myth: Asthma can not be controlled.**

**Fact:** With commitment and a little extra time, it is possible to control asthma. The key is identifying and eliminating the triggers. Some people's asthma is triggered by a specific allergen; for others, it is a combination of allergens. By working with your doctor and keeping an asthma diary to track asthma episodes, you can pinpoint what sparks an attack and then develop a plan to manage asthma.

**Myth: Asthma always begins in childhood.** **Fact:** Asthma has no respect for age. Some people outgrow asthma after childhood, some first develop it in adulthood, and others must cope with it all of their lives.

## Get the Point



The three basic kitchen knives that cover most cutting tasks are a chef's knife, a paring knife and a serrated bread knife.

To help prolong the life of your knives follow these suggestions:

1. Many knife companies recommend against washing knives in the dishwasher. This may damage the blade. Wooden handles may not hold up well when washed in the dishwasher. Always dry the knife before storage.
2. Follow manufacturer's directions for sharpening knives. A sharp knife cuts better and is safer than a dull knife. There is a tendency to use too much force with a dull knife, lose control and get cut.
3. Avoid cutting on hard surfaces that dull the edge of your knife, such as glass or acrylic plastic cutting boards. Softer surfaces, such as polyethylene plastic cutting boards, are much easier on knives. Look for boards that say they won't dull knives.
4. Store knives so that the blades are kept separate and clean. Do not throw them together in a drawer where they can bump against each other and possibly dull or damage the blades. It is harder to keep knives clean in a knife block as the slits in the knife block can not be washed.
5. Never put a knife in a dishpan with other dishes as it is easy to cut your finger.

## Free Credit Reports for Texans

**Beginning June 1, Free Credit Reports are Available in Texas**

Late last year a nationwide process of offering consumers free copies of their credit reports got under way. Texans have their turn starting June 1. A recent amendment to the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act requires each of the nationwide consumer reporting companies to provide you with a free copy of your credit report, at your request, once every 12 months.

Consumers can order free copies of your own credit reports from each of the three credit-reporting agencies – Equifax, Experian and TransUnion. However, to order free copies of your credit reports, consumers need to know the procedure. The three credit-reporting agencies have set up three ways consumers can order credit reports:

1. On the Web at <http://www.annualcreditreport.com>
2. By toll-free telephone at (877) 322-8228; or
3. By completing the Annual Credit Report Request Form and mailing it to: Annual Credit Report Request Service, P.O. Box 105281, Atlanta, GA 30348-5281. The form is available through the FTC Web site at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/credit/freereports.htm>

The three agencies are providing free credit reports only through these three contacts. If you order your report online, make sure you are at the correct web site. People who have heard about the free credit report but can't remember where to get it are likely to do an online search for "free credit report". That's where you could get into imposter web sites that could be luring consumers to inappropriate and risky sites. Use only the Web site, telephone number or mailing address listed above.



# Getting to the Table

Few would argue about the importance of family meals. But when reality strikes, any number of obstacles can get in the way of dishing up dinner.

## Work, Sports, Or Other Commitments

◆ **Be flexible with the time of meals.** If children have after school activities, plan a late dinner or have breakfast together instead.



◆ **Be creative with where you place your plates.** Dinner does not always have to be on the kitchen table. Spread a blanket at the soccer

field or have a "tailgater" in your car.

## Everyone's Taste Buds Are Different

◆ **Get kids involved.** Good kitchen helpers usually make good food tasters. Children learn best by doing, not watching.

◆ **Let every eater plan a day's menu.** Rotate meal planning to satisfy everyone's taste buds.

## Too Tired To Plan, Shop and Cook

◆ **Keep mealtime simple and easy.** Dinner during the week should be nutritious but quick. Save the complicated meals for when you have more time.

◆ **Share the responsibility.** Let one person shop, another cook – and do not forget the

clean up committee.

◆ **Stock your pantry** and freezer once a month with some quick to fix staples to dish up anytime, anywhere.

◆ **Make a list** of quick family favorites to keep on hand for those extra hectic times.

## Don't Enjoy Cooking

◆ **Have a potluck** with neighbors or friends to share cooking duties...and the fun.

◆ **Maybe there is a budding chef in your house.** Find out where family members' talents and interests lie.

◆ **Try a new recipe** to spark your interest in cooking.

Remember, even Julia Child had to learn to cook at some time.

# Introducing MyPyramid!

Did you hear about MyPyramid, which was announced in mid-April? This new symbol and interactive food guidance system was designed to help us live longer, better and healthier lives.

MyPyramid, replaces the Food Guide Pyramid that was introduced in 1992. It is part of an overall food guidance system that emphasizes the need for a more individualized approach for improving diet and lifestyle. MyPyramid was developed to carry the messages of the dietary guidelines that were introduced earlier this year and to make us aware of the vital health benefits of simple and modest improvements in nutrition, physical activity and lifestyle behavior.

The MyPyramid symbol, which is deliberately simple, is meant to encourage us to make healthier food choices and to be active each day. The symbol represents the recommended proportion of foods from each food group and focuses on the importance of making smart food choices in every food group every day. Physical activity is a new element in the symbol.

Most of us know that the typical American diet is out of balance. On average, we do not eat enough dark green or orange vegetables, legumes, fruits, whole grains and low-fat milk products. We eat more fats and added sugars. To bring the diet in balance, MyPyramid recommends eating more of the under-consumed foods

and eating less fats, added sugars and caloric sweeteners and foods rich in these.

Some parts of MyPyramid will be very familiar, such as the foods groups. These now include:

<b>Grains</b>	<b>Vegetables</b>	<b>Fruits</b>
<b>Oils</b>	<b>Meat &amp; Beans</b>	<b>Milk</b>

The new parts to the food guide are oils, discretionary calories, and physical activity.

Since MyPyramid is individualized, you will need to go to [www.MyPyramid.gov](http://www.MyPyramid.gov) and click on My Pyramid Plan. Enter a few basic facts including your age, sex and physical activity level. You will get a handout to download that includes the amounts needed in each group.



**MyPyramid.gov**  
STEPS TO A HEALTHIER YOU

Go to —  
[www.MyPyramid.gov](http://www.MyPyramid.gov)

## Children's Emotions

Emotions are developed early in life. The four basic emotions are joy, anger, sadness and fear. These emotions are in place before the infant reaches his first birthday. Young children have the ability to feel these emotions just as intensely as adults do. Children generally express their emotions through play, art, writing, or behavior. Their facial expressions are indications of how they might be feeling.

Since children are not generally very verbal about their feelings, parents need to look for signals or

patterns of emotional expression. If we are truly going to communicate with children on a meaningful level, we must speak to their feelings and emotions.

Tools parents can use to help children deal with their feelings and emotions are:

- ☺ Be a role model – express your own feelings and emotions and deal with them in a healthy way.



- ☺ Be available – spend time one-on-one with each child. Use eye contact and send messages that show you care how they feel. Listen and watch for subtle messages.
- ☺ Listen reflectively – identify how you think the child feels. Give the feeling a name. Use statements, not questions.
- ☺ Help your child discover his own personal expressions for releasing his feelings and emotions

## Why Eat Together

*We argued. We sulked. We laughed.  
We pitched for favors. We shouted.  
We listened.*

*It is still our family's finest hour.*

– Erma Bombeck on shared family meals

**Nutrition** – Studies show that most people, children, teens, older adults and singles, eat more balanced meals and a wider variety of foods when they eat with family or friends.

**Family Tradition** – Food served at the family table helps shape and give lasting meaning to our cultural heritage. Positive food memories created during childhood are cherished for life.

**Communication** – Shared mealtimes offer a chance to communicate with neighbors, friends and family, helping to build a strong spirit of community and commitment to one another.

**Culinary Skills** – Children learn basic cooking skills and learn to appreciate a variety of tasty foods when they are involved in the mealtime preparation.



## Ending Before School Chaos

Summer is the perfect time to think about ways to eliminate the early morning scramble that seems to accompany getting kids off to school. Waiting until the September school bell rings only adds to the anxiety.

Acquire a big calendar for the kitchen – one with enough space for writing school assignments and deadlines. Making entries can be part of the coming-home-from-school ritual. Position an “in” basket so notes and papers requiring parental signatures

can go straight from the backpack to the basket and back again. Hang a clear vinyl shoe bag (at a height kids can reach) on the inside of the coat closet. Use it for mittens, caps, and maybe even the grownups’ car keys and house keys so there is no “treasure” hunt in the mornings.

Help children organize their rooms. Once school supplies are purchased and all is organized, take “after” photos of the room,

desk and backpack. Many children, especially young ones, need visual reminders of where everything goes.

Finally, when purchasing new school clothes, check the care labels to see if they can be easily laundered. Then, if a favorite item needs a night before washing, it will not be a family crisis.



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### Remember When

Close your eyes and go back in time... Way back...

I'm talking about hide-and-seek at dusk. The Good Humor man, Red Light, Green Light. The corner store. Hopscotch, butterscotch, double dutch, jacks, kickball, dodge ball. Mother May I? Red Rover and Roly Poly. Hula Hoops. Running through the sprinkler. The smell of the sun and licking salty lips. Wax lips and mustaches! An ice cream cone on a warm summer night — chocolate or vanilla or strawberry or maybe butter pecan. A Cherry Coke from the soda fountain at the corner drug store.

Watching Saturday morning cartoons with short commercials—Fat Albert, Road Runner, He-Man, The Three Stooges, and Bugs, or staying up for Gunsmoke. Or back further, listening to Superman on the radio. When around the corner seemed far away. And going downtown seemed like going somewhere.

A million mosquito bites. Sticky fingers. Cops and Robbers, Cowboys and Indians, Zorro. Climbing trees. Walking to school, no matter what the weather was. Running till you were out of breath. Laughing so hard that your stomach hurt. Jumping on the bed. Pillow fights. Spinning around, getting dizzy and falling down was cause for giggles. Being tired from playing...remember that?

The worst embarrassment was being picked last for a team. War was a card game. Water balloons were the ultimate weapon. Baseball cards in the spokes transformed any bike into a motorcycle.

I'm not finished yet – eating Kool-Aid powder. Remember when...

There were only two types of sneakers for boys and girls—Keds and PF Flyers, and the only time you wore them at school was for “Gym.” It wasn't odd to have two or three “best” friends. When nobody owned a purebred dog. When a quarter was a decent allowance and another quarter was a miracle.

When you got your windshield cleaned, oil checked, and gas pumped without asking, for free, every time. And you did not pay for air in the tires. And you got trading stamps to boot! When laundry detergent had free glasses, dishes or towels hidden inside the box.

When nearly everyone's Mom was at home when the kids got there. When it took 5 minutes for the TV to warm up, if you had one. When your Mom wore nylons that came in two pieces. When it was magic when dad would “remove” his thumb. When it was considered a great privilege to be taken out to dinner at a real restaurant with your mom and dad.

Didn't that feel good...just to go back and say, Yeah! I remember that!

Remember when... Decisions were made by going “eeny-meeny-miney-mo.” Mistakes were corrected by simply exclaiming “do-over!” Money issues were handled by whoever was the banker in “Monopoly”. The worst thing you could catch from the opposite sex was cooties. Nobody was prettier than Mom. Scrapes and bruises were kissed and made better. Ice cream was considered a basic food group. New abilities were discovered because of a “double-dog dare.” Older siblings were the worst tormentors, but also the fiercest protectors.

*If you can remember most or all of these, then you have lived!*