

MARCH is National Nutrition Month and the theme for March 2009 is "Eat Right" The campaign focuses attention on the importance of making informed choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits. A registered and certified dietitian is available for consult through Women's Health/Health Center weekly. Phone the Health Center at 574-284-4805 to schedule your appointment.

The Skinny on Fat

While too much fat is bad for us, some fat is a necessary part of our diet. Dietary fat helps a child's body to grow and develop correctly; to develop their brains and nervous system. Fats fuel the body and help absorb some vitamins. Fats are the building blocks of hormones. Fats offer nutrition and flavor to foods and help us feel "full."

Too much fat in the diet, whether it's the amount or the wrong type of fat, can increase our risk for many chronic diseases. Besides weight gain, a high fat diet can contribute to heart disease, diabetes, and infertility. Studies show it can also hurt learning ability and memory. High fat diets are linked to Alzheimers, poor sleep, high blood pressure, liver damage and certain cancers like breast, colon, rectum and prostate.

What can we do? Here are some tips for low-fat eating:

- avoid high-fat breads: biscuits, croissants, doughnuts, cakes and cookies
- when baking breads, muffins, brownies or cookies, replace half of the oil with applesauce
- use only small amounts of sauces, gravies and salad dressings
- trim visible fat from meats
- bake skin off of poultry
- grill, roast, boil or bake meats
- choose lean meats and fish: white meat chicken or turkey, tuna and salmon
- avoid high-fat meats: Spam, bologna, hot dogs, bacon or sausage
- choose fat-free or low-fat dairy products: skim or 1% milk
- some foods, including most fruits and vegetables, have almost no fat
- try to get most of your fats from lean meats, fish and heart-healthy oils, such as safflower, soybean, corn, sesame, olive, canola ,avocado, cottonseed, grapeseed, walnut and flaxseed
- reduce serving sizes and don't eat second helpings
- occasionally choose a serving of legumes (dried beans, peas, lentils) and grains instead of meat
- use non-stick pans, instead of adding oil or butter to the pan
- season vegetables with herbs and spices, instead of butter and sauces

Follow the 80-20 rule: if you generally eat healthy foods 80% of the time, a high-fat or high-calorie choice 20% of the time may not be a problem!