**TIMELY TIPS 🧠**

**Improve Heart and Brain Health Through Nutrition**

With normal aging, your heart function and brain function can slowly decline. But nutrition and improved lifestyle choices have been shown to reverse these side effects. There are very clear links between your heart health and your brain health.

Vascular, or blood vessel, health is essential to your overall heart health as well as brain health. The buildup of plaque in the arteries and the stiffening of these arteries are main contributors to heart disease. These same factors can affect brain function because of the decrease of oxygen-rich blood to the brain.

So, to increase brain function and improve health, it is important to reduce cardiovascular risks by increasing physical activity, quitting smoking, managing blood sugar levels as well as cholesterol levels, and eating a healthy diet.

Studies show that a diet for both brain and heart health includes fruits, vegetables, fish, whole-grain and high-fiber foods, fat-free or low-fat dairy, beans and lean meats. A diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids can also benefit both the brain and the heart.

Omega-3 fatty acids are found in plant sources such as nuts and seeds, vegetable oils, leafy vegetables, and can also be found in fish. These types of foods are shown to lower cholesterol levels which in turn decreases the risk for plaque buildup in the blood vessels. These foods can also lower blood pressure, reducing the risk of hypertension and reducing the strain on blood vessels and inflammation.

Not only are these benefits great for the heart and brain, but they are also shown to be effective for weight loss and increased energy throughout the day. These are just some of the many benefits to eating a healthy diet rich in omega-3s while also being physically active. The sooner you start these healthy lifestyle choices, the better your heart and brain health will be in the long run.

Reference: [http://www.strokeassociation.org/STROKEORG/LifeAfterStroke/HealthyLivingAfterStroke/Nutrition/Food-for-Thought-Heart-healthy-Diet-is-also-Good-For-Your-Brain_UCM_449603_Article.jsp#W7eqwbaZP-Y](http://www.strokeassociation.org/STROKEORG/LifeAfterStroke/HealthyLivingAfterStroke/Nutrition/Food-for-Thought-Heart-healthy-Diet-is-also-Good-For-Your-Brain_UCM_449603_Article.jsp#W7eqwbaZP-Y)
Eating healthy on the go

In our busy lives, it is often hard to find healthy things to eat while going through a restaurant drive-through, running into a convenience store, or finding a vending machine. Convenience is often prioritized over health, but eating healthfully doesn’t have to be difficult or expensive. In fact, it can be quite easy. Here are some helpful tips for you and your family to eat healthy on the go.

♥ Planning ahead and packing foods for your busiest days can be the most helpful. Reach for fresh vegetables that can be cut up and portioned into plastic baggies.

♥ Low-fat cheese sticks or whole grain crackers are also great choices for healthy snacks to take with you.

♥ If you do have to stop at fast-food restaurants, try healthier options on their menus such as salads, grilled instead of fried sandwiches, and swapping out the French fries for a healthier side item. Some fast-food chains, are now offering fruits as sides instead of fries.

♥ Reading labels is also important when buying foods at the grocery or picking up a quick snack at a convenience store. Choose snacks that have lower calories, sodium and low added sugars and fats.

♥ Try low-fat yogurt or fruit when choosing a snack. Fresh fruits and vegetables are always a better option when compared with prepackaged snacks.

♥ We often get a lot of our empty calories from sugar-sweetened beverages, so consider drinking water or reduced fat milk when choosing your beverages throughout the day.

Eating healthy does not have to be complicated, and making small easy changes throughout your day can make a big difference.

Reference: https://www.choosemyplate.gov/ten-tips-eating-foods-away-home

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New Potato and Asparagus Soup

Ingredients:
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 medium size, boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1 medium diced onion
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- zest and juice of 1 lemon
- 2 cups new potatoes
- 3 cups vegetable broth
- 1 cup low fat milk
- 1 pound fresh asparagus
- ½ cup reduced fat sour cream
- Fresh ground black pepper

Yield: 8, 1 cup servings

Directions:
1. Pour oil into a large saucepan over medium heat.
2. Remove fat from chicken and cut chicken into ½ inch pieces.
3. Cook chicken and diced onion in the oil for about 5 minutes or until chicken is done and onions are golden.
4. Stir in salt, garlic powder, lemon zest, and ½ of the lemon juice.
5. Cut potatoes into ½ inch chunks, leaving the skin on.
6. Add potatoes and vegetable broth then simmer, stirring occasionally, until potatoes are tender.
7. Stir in the milk.
8. Trim and cut asparagus into 1 inch pieces and add to mixture.
9. Simmer over medium heat, partially covered and cook until the asparagus is tender, about 15 minutes.
10. Stir in ½ cup sour cream and season with salt and pepper to taste.

Nutritional Analysis: 270 calories, 7 g fat, 2 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat, 760 mg sodium, 36 g carbohydrate, 4 g fiber, 8 g sugar, 16 g protein

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$Spending Smart$

MAKING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR TAX REFUND

Tax refund season is an excellent opportunity to begin the new year making wise financial decisions. According to the Internal Revenue Service, the average tax refund in 2016 was about $3,050. Historically, Americans have found a wide variety of uses for their tax refunds which range all the way from saving to spending, and everything in between.

Maybe you have wondered, what should I be doing with my tax return? Consider: Contributing to Emergency Savings, Reduce or Eliminate Debt, or Pay Yourself...In the Future. You can do this in a variety of ways: Start a college fund for your children, Contribute to your retirement, or Invest in the stock market, during the upcoming tax return season.

Spend it Wisely. If you elect not to use your tax refund for any of the above and you have decided you want to spend it, do yourself a favor and spend it wisely. Use tax refund dollars to improve your vehicle or your home because these expenses pay dividends in the future as well. For instance, renovating your home has the future added benefits of saving on energy costs and improving the value of your home.

Alex Elswick, MS, Extension Associate Family Resource Management
Winter is a great time for families

The winter months are a great time to catch up on much needed family time. Yes, it’s cold. Yes, you cannot get outdoors as much, but around your home you have plenty of indoor activities to do with your children that can create a meaningful family experience and lots of wonderful memories.

Time with their parents is extremely important to the well-being of children. Studies have shown families who spend time together have happier, healthier kids who do better in school. Family time promotes emotional health in kids, which is linked to a greater likelihood that they will avoid risky behaviors, such as drug use, and have lower risks for depression.

The possibilities for meaningful indoor family time are as limitless as your imagination. Here are some ideas to get you thinking about activities to do with your kids.

Story time: While you can and should spend time reading to your children, there is so much more you can do with story time. Let your imaginations run wild as you make up stories together. Make up a silly story to tell your kids or involve them in the creation of a silly story. You can also take turns sharing your favorite family stories or memories.

Dance party: Dancing to music is a great way to improve everyone’s mood and get your hearts pumping when outside physical activities are limited. Let everyone have a turn selecting a song. Remember to keep the music age appropriate, especially with younger children.

Kitchen time: Especially around the holidays, you can spend so much family time cooking in the kitchen. Whip up something sweet to share for an after-dinner treat. Have your children help you prepare food items that will be gifts for friends and family members. Not only will you be spending time together but you’ll be teaching them valuable math and life skills that are central to food preparation.

Scavenger hunts: The premise of this game is to send a child or children with a list of objects to go find and retrieve. It is simple to create and can be as long or short as you wish. Start by making a list of items commonly found in or around your home. Continue to add items to the list that require creativity and/or adventure, such as “buried treasure” which you can define however you chose.

More information on parenting and families is available at the Pendleton County Extension office.

Source: David Weisenhorn, senior specialist for parenting and child development education

Move More

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services just updated guidelines for physical activity for the first time in 10 years. New scientific evidence supports the importance of physical activity and the high risks of sedentary behavior. Moving more throughout your day can help reduce the risks of many health problems:

- High blood pressure
- Type 2 diabetes
- Cancer (bladder, breast, colon, endometrium, esophagus, kidney, lung and stomach)
- Dementia

You know you need physical activity to stay healthy and reduce the risks of chronic disease. However, did you know it can help you feel better right away? By moving more, you naturally boost your mood, sharpen your focus, reduce your stress, and improve your sleep.

Despite the overwhelming evidence of the health benefits of physical activity, only about 20 percent of Americans meet the recommendations in the Physical Activity Guidelines.

No matter who you are or where you live, you can find a way to be active.

What are the physical activity guidelines for adults?

At least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity and at least two days a week of muscle-strengthening activity.

Moderate-intensity activity is anything that gets your heart beating faster than normal; like walking the dog or gardening. Moderate-intensity activity is when you are breathing hard but can still easily have a conversation.

Muscle-strengthening activity is anything that makes your muscles do more work than normal. This could include push-ups or lifting weights.

Tight on time? Get the same benefits in half the time. If you step it up to vigorous-intensity aerobic activity, aim for at least 75 minutes a week. Vigorous-intensity activity is when you can only say a few words before you have to take a breath.

The good news is that anything that gets you moving counts. Like cleaning the house, raking leaves, taking the stairs, or walking to your car. You don’t have to do things that feel like exercise to get the benefits of physical activity.

Take the first step and get a little more active each day. Start with just five minutes. It all adds up!

Sources:
NEWS . . . FROM PENDLETON COUNTY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

Chicken and Brussels Sprouts One Pan Meal

Ingredients:
2 skinless, boneless chicken breasts (about 1 pound)
1 tablespoon olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste
12-14 Brussels sprouts, trimmed and quartered
1 cup sliced fresh mushrooms
1 red bell pepper, diced, about 1 cup
1 medium yellow onion, diced, about 1 cup
2 cloves garlic, minced
1/2 cup half-and-half
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
3/4 cup Parmesan cheese

Yield: 6, 1 cup servings

Directions: Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. Cut chicken into bite-sized pieces. Heat oil in a heavy, oven-safe skillet or pan over medium heat. Add chicken and sauté 3-4 minutes. Lightly season with salt and pepper. Add vegetables and stir gently to combine. Cook 3-5 minutes until vegetables are tender. Remove from heat. If skillet or pan is not oven-safe, transfer mixture to a baking dish. In a small bowl, combine half-and-half, nutmeg and salt and pepper to taste. Pour mixture over chicken and vegetables. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Bake 25-30 minutes until lightly golden on top. Serve hot.

Nutritional Analysis:
220 calories; 9 g fat; 3.5 g saturated fat; 0 g trans fat; 70 mg cholesterol; 340 mg sodium; 11 g carbohydrate; 3 g fiber; 4 g sugars; 23 g protein

Snow Policy
If the Pendleton County schools are closed due to snow, most Extension programs and meetings scheduled that day are also canceled. Please call the Extension Office to see if the activity has been rescheduled or is still happening. 654-3395

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FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
Kenna Knight
EXTENSION AGENT FOR FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES EDUCATION-PENDLETON COUNTY
Healthy Beverages

Many of us are aware that we need to make healthy food choices such as eating vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low-fat or fat-free milk and milk products, and lean protein foods. However, many of us do not realize that making healthy food choices also includes paying attention to what we drink.

This class will help you:
- State what a sugar-sweetened beverage (SSB) is
- Explain what happens when a person consumes too many SSBS
- Identify sources of sugar in beverages
- Reflect on your personal beverage intake
- Be empowered to make smarter beverage choices
- Set goals for healthy beverage choices & snacks each day

Date: Wednesday, February 13  
Time: 6:30—8:00 PM  
Location: Pendleton Extension Office  
45 David Pribble Drive, Falmouth, KY 41040

MyPlate

The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans provides information to help us choose a nutritious diet within our caloric needs. MyPlate is the new national standard for building a healthy diet. It focuses on building each meal in a healthy way, based on the portions you put on your plate.

This class will help you:
- State the different foods that should be included on a healthy plate
- Explain the benefits of healthy eating
- Reflect on the types of food you eat daily
- Be empowered to make smarter food choices
- Set goals for healthy eating
- Choose foods according to the MyPlate pattern each day

Date: Tuesday, February 26  
Time: 6:30—8:00 PM  
Location: Pendleton Extension Office  
45 David Pribble Drive, Falmouth, KY 41040

Call us to register:

Please RSVP by calling 859.654.3395.  
There is no cost.
Join us!
Multi-Cooker Class

I will be presenting this class in Gallatin County and Bracken County. If there is enough interest I will present in our county. Some might have the night available to go out of county to receive program so I thought I would share.

Date: Thursday, February 7th, 6:00 p.m.
Location: Gallatin County Extension Office - RSVP by calling 567-5481

Date: Tuesday, March 5th, 6:00 p.m.
Location: Bracken County Extension Office - RSVP by calling 1-606-735-2141

Come to our hands-on cooking class to learn all about multi-cooker appliances, such as the Instant Pot and Power Cooker.
We will be demonstrating how to use them and will end the class by enjoying the foods we prepare.
Pendleton County Extension
Proudly Presents:

FARM DIINNER THEATER

HAVE A NIGHT OUT ON US!

Bring your spouse, grab a friend, or come on out for a night filled, with fun and laughter, as your neighbors entertain and educate in this delightful production on farm safety and health.

THE MEAL AND LAUGHS ARE FREE!

SPACE IS LIMITED
RESERVE YOUR SPOT TODAY
REGISTRATION REQUIRED
RECOMMENDED FOR AGES 9+
859.654.3395