January is National Fiber Focus Month

What is dietary fiber and why is it important to include in a healthy diet? Dietary fiber is the part of the plant that we eat that we cannot digest. Because we cannot digest fiber, it has no calories. There are two types of fiber – soluble and insoluble. Soluble fiber is thought to help lower LDL (bad) cholesterol and to help regulate blood sugar. Soluble fiber is called soluble because it absorbs water in the intestines. Oats have the most soluble fiber of any plant food. Other plant sources of soluble fiber include barley, legumes, peas and citrus fruits. Insoluble fiber helps you feel full faster which in turn helps you to eat less.

Insoluble fiber also adds bulk to stools, helping you to stay regular. Good sources of insoluble fiber are whole wheat bread, cereals, barley, rice, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower and apple skins. Add more fiber slowly to your diet so that your body has time to adjust to the fiber increase. Make sure to drink lots of water and include a wide variety of fiber containing foods. The daily fiber goal for adults is 25 grams per day. Sound like a lot? Check out this list of foods that add up to 25 grams of fiber:

1 cup cooked oatmeal - 4 grams
1 raw pear with the skin – 5.5 grams
1 cup cooked whole wheat spaghetti – 6 grams
1 cup cooked broccoli – 5 grams
3 cups air popped popcorn – 3 grams
1 medium orange – 3 grams

Grand total – 26.5 grams of fiber!
Stay Active Outdoors this Winter!

Winter in Western New York can be tough. It’s snowy, windy, cold and often times grey. The winter weather does not motivate most of us to get outside and take part in winter activities. But, being physically active during the winter (and all year round!) can help to keep our minds and bodies healthy. Participating in physical activity that increases your heart and breathing rate helps to build your endurance and keep you strong to do the tasks you do each day. Getting outside can boost your mood and many winter activities burn lots of calories. Some winter activities, like walking, shoveling snow or sledding, are free. Often for only a few dollars per person (the cost of renting the equipment), you can snowshoe, cross country ski and ice skate. Check out what is available in your area. You may be surprised at just how inexpensive it can be to try a new winter time activity. Here is a short list of how many calories a 150 pound woman can burn doing these winter time activities for 30 minutes:

- Snowshoeing: 250
- Cross country skiing: 250
- Ice skating: 180
- Sledding: 180
- Shoveling snow: 150

How much food equals 250 calories? One example is one cup of toasted o’s cereal with ½ cup of fat free milk and a medium banana is 245 calories. These activities are a good way to burn calories and they are a great way to get your family off the couch and outside this winter!

Dressed-Up Fruit Salad

**Serving Size:** ⅛ of recipe  
**Yield:** 8

**Ingredients:**
- 2 apples
- 2 bananas
- 2 oranges
- 1 small can of pineapple chunks in juice
- 1 8-ounce carton of non-fat vanilla yogurt

**Directions:**
1. Wash apples, remove cores, and chop them into pieces.
2. Peel and slice bananas.
3. Peel and chop oranges into pieces.
4. Drain pineapple in colander. Save juice in small bowl.
5. Measure 2 tablespoons of saved pineapple juice and stir into yogurt.
6. Mix apples, bananas, oranges, and pineapple together in large bowl. Stir in the yogurt and pineapple juice mixture. Mix well.

**Variations:** Try different combinations of fresh or canned fruit. Substitute lemon yogurt for vanilla yogurt.

**Nutrition Facts:** Serving Size: ⅛ of recipe, 100 calories, 5 calories from fat, 0g total fat, 0g saturated fat, 0mg cholesterol, 25mg sodium, 25g total carbohydrate, 3g dietary fiber, 20g sugar, 2g protein, 40% Vitamin C, 8% calcium, 2% iron.

**Source:** Sisters in Health: A Nutrition Program for Women. Division of Nutritional Sciences, Cornell University and Cornell Cooperative Extension, 1999.
**Enchilada Casserole**

**Ingredients:**
1 28-ounce can green enchilada sauce  
2 cups cooked beans or canned beans (pinto, black, kidney), drained  
3 cups cooked brown rice  
1 15-ounce can whole kernel corn, drained or 1 ½ cups frozen corn  
12 6-inch corn tortillas  
3 cups reduced-fat cheddar cheese, grated

**Directions:**
1. Preheat oven to 350°F.  
2. In a large bowl, mix sauce, beans, rice and corn.  
3. Place half of mixture on bottom of a 9 x 13 pan.  
4. Place corn tortillas over the mixture.  
5. Place the remaining mixture evenly over the tortillas.  
6. Top with cheese.  
7. Cover with foil. Bake for 10 minutes. Remove cover and bake for 15-20 more minutes, or until bubbly.  
8. Refrigerate leftovers. Keeps up to a month in the freezer double-wrapped in foil.

**Nutrition Facts:** 430 calories, 130 calories from fat, 14g total fat, 6g saturated fat, 30mg cholesterol, 1040mg sodium, 58g total carbohydrate, 8g dietary fiber, 3g sugar, 21g protein, 20% Vitamin C, 70% calcium, 10% iron.

**Adapted from:** Adapted from *Eating Smart, Being Active*, California EFNEP and Colorado EFNEP

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**Black Bean & Pumpkin Soup**

**Ingredients:**
3 15-ounce cans black beans  
1 16-ounce can diced tomatoes  
1 ¼ cups onion, chopped  
4 cloves garlic, chopped  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
2 tablespoons ground cumin  
½ teaspoon pepper  
4 ½ cups low fat, low sodium beef broth  
1 16-ounce can pumpkin puree  
½ pound chopped ham  
4 tablespoons apple cider vinegar

**Directions:**
1. Puree beans and tomatoes in blender, set aside.  
2. In a large pan heat oil. Add onion, garlic, cumin and pepper and cook until lightly browned.  
3. Stir in bean/tomato puree, beef broth and pumpkin.  
4. Let simmer 25 minutes, or until thick enough to coat back of spoon.  
5. Add ham and vinegar; stir until heated through.

**Nutrition Facts:** 160 calories, 40 calories from fat, 4.5g total fat, 1g saturated fat, 10mg cholesterol, 600mg sodium, 18g total carbohydrate, 7g dietary fiber, 10g protein, 6% calcium, 15% iron.

**Source:** Recipe from *Cooking Together for Family Meals Teaching Guide*, Year 2, 2/18/08. Pat Thonney, FNEC Finger Lakes Region and Division of Nutritional Sciences, Cornell University
Head to your local library with your child and borrow *The Berenstain Bears and Too Much Junk Food* by Stan Berenstain. It’s a wonderful book that tells the story of how your body works and why it’s important to eat healthy and be physically active. After reading the book together, talk about what your family can do to stay healthy during the winter.

**Folic Acid Awareness Week**

Did you know that getting enough folic acid in your diet can help to prevent brain and spine birth defects? Folic Acid Awareness Week is the first week of January. If you are of child bearing age, it’s important to get enough folic acid in your diet. Folic acid is a B-vitamin that the body uses to make cells.

When you are pregnant, your baby is making new cells at a fast rate. Having enough folic acid in your diet can help to make sure your baby is healthy. All enriched grain foods and cereal in the United States now are fortified with folic acid, but that may not be enough to meet your needs. Folic acid is also found in dark, leafy vegetables, eggs, beans, sunflower seeds, strawberries, cantaloupe and other melons and oranges. If you do not regularly eat a variety of these foods, talk to your doctor about taking a multi-vitamin that includes folic acid.

**Citrus fruits are in season in January**

Look for good buys at the supermarket on oranges, grapefruits, tangerines, clementines, lemons, limes, kumquats, pummelos and Ugli fruit.

Why choose citrus fruits? Citrus fruits are excellent sources of Vitamin C, potassium and fiber. Vitamin C is an antioxidant that can help protect your body and help fight cancer. Potassium is a mineral that can help keep your blood pressure at a healthy level. Fiber can help keep you full and to improve your cholesterol numbers. Citrus fruit have a long storage life in the refrigerator and are a great snack any time of day. The tangy-ness of citrus fruit is a great addition to vegetable salads too!