

SPRING/SUMMER 2021



# NEWSLETTER

## THE NEW U.S. DIETARY GUIDELINES: HEALTHY EATING FOR A LIFETIME

Our nation received the latest news of a wonderful practical dietary guide. This nutrition guide, *The New U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020- 2025 (DGA)* was developed to show Americans how to eat healthy for now during the Covid-19 pandemic and over a lifetime. The DGA is the scientific evidence- based advice on what we should eat and drink to promote health and reduce chronic disease. These dietary recommendations are produced by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services every five years. The chronic diseases that affect Alabamians the most are heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. Most of our leading health authorities suggest eating healthy overtime is what really makes the difference in combating chronic disease.

The DGA recommends everyone to strive to eat a healthy dietary pattern. A dietary pattern is defined as the combination of foods and beverages that make up an individual's complete dietary intake over time. This means to eat less of unhealthy foods and eat more regularly healthy foods. Make sure to keep variety and moderation in sight to avoid a deficit in nutrients or overconsumption of fat, salt, and sugar. Speaking of that trio, if we can decrease the amount of either one daily can decrease unhealthy weight gain, lessen risk of high blood pressure, and decrease high cholesterol, respectfully. Choose more of the healthy selections and avoid a large amount of the fat, salt, and added sugar foods and beverages.

According to the DGA, a dietary pattern may even be a better predictor of our overall health status and disease risk than eating individual foods or nutrients. A practical tool that partners with the DGA is MyPlate. This tool plan for the average person to consume three servings of low-fat dairy, two servings of lean protein, two servings of whole fruits and 100 % real fruit juices, three servings of colorful vegetables and 100% real vegetable juices, and six servings of 100% whole grains. Go to MyPlate at <https://www.myplate.gov/myplate-plan>

to get a personal calorie and servings guide.

It is never too late to begin to eat healthy. All types of foods can count whether they are fresh, frozen, or canned. Remember what makes us stick to a healthy dietary plan is to make it ours and customize the foods to fit our taste buds. So, think of adopting a healthy eating pattern with exercise and healthy habits as a step to achieve a lifetime of wellbeing.



# STRETCHING FOR EXERCISE

Stretching is a critical part of any physical activity program. Whether you're new to exercise or a seasoned athlete, older or younger, everyone can benefit from a regular stretching routine. The two main types of stretching are static and dynamic. Static stretches are those you do standing, sitting or lying down still and holding a single position for period of time. Dynamic stretches are controlled movements that prepare your muscles, ligaments and other soft tissues for performance and safety. By incorporating as little as 5 to 10 minutes of dynamic and static stretches into your daily workout can increase your flexibility or range of motion, improve your posture, and relieve stress. According to the American Council on Exercise (ACE), a leading nonprofit organization providing accredited certifications to health professionals and coaches states these following 10 reasons to stretch:

- 1. Decreases muscle stiffness and increases range of motion.** Stretching helps improve your range of motion, which may also slow the degeneration of your joints.
- 2. May reduce your risk of injury.** A flexible muscle is less likely to become injured if you need to make a sudden move.
- 3. Helps relieve post-exercise aches and pains.** After a hard workout, stretching your muscles helps keep them loose and lessens the shortening and tightening effect that can lead to post-workout aches and pains.
- 4. Improves posture.** Stretching the muscles of the lower back, shoulders and chest helps keep your back in better alignment and improves your posture.
- 5. Helps reduce or manage stress.** Well-stretched muscles hold less tension and, therefore, can help you feel less stressed.

- 6. Reduces tense muscles and helps muscles to relax.** Chronically tense muscles tend to cut off their own circulation, resulting in a lack of oxygen and essential nutrients. Stretching allows your muscles to relax.



- 7. Improves efficiency and overall functional performance.** A flexible joint requires less energy to move through a wider range of motion, a flexible body improves overall performance by creating more energy-efficient movements.
- 8. Prepares the body for the stress of exercise.** Stretching prior to exercise allows your muscles to loosen up and able to withstand the exercise or activity you choose to do.
- 9. Promotes blood circulation.** Stretching increases blood supply to your muscles and joints, which allows for greater nutrient transportation and improves the circulation of blood through your entire body.
- 10. Decreases the risk of low-back pain.** Flexibility in the hamstrings, hip flexors and muscles attached to the pelvis relieves stress on the lumbar spine, which in turn reduces your risk of low-back pain.

Now that you know the many reasons why to stretch check out this sample plan created by U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs. Go to [https://www.move.va.gov/docs/NewHandouts/PhysicalActivity/P33\\_SampleFlexibilityProgramForBeginners.pdf](https://www.move.va.gov/docs/NewHandouts/PhysicalActivity/P33_SampleFlexibilityProgramForBeginners.pdf).

# CHOOSE CULTURE FOR YOUR PLATE

Culture refers to the ideas, behaviors, attitudes, food, and traditions that exist within a large group of people often passed down from one generation to the next generation. In respect to the many melting pot of cultures, the National Nutrition Month this year inspired Americans to personalize their plate to fit your own cultural foods. In fact, the new 2020 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* says, "Nutrient-dense culturally relevant foods and beverages are part of all of the food groups."

Regardless of your cultural food choices, remember to follow the guidelines for a healthy MyPlate. First make half your plate fruits and vegetables, include whole wheat grain choices, and the rest of the plate to include protein, such as lean meat, poultry, seafood or beans. Next add calcium-rich foods such as fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt, cheese or calcium-fortified non-dairy beverages with each meal.

With increasing varieties of food available you can make nutritious meals fit within any cultural preferences. Some meal examples to try of various cultural foods are the following:

**Chinese:** Stir-fried chicken and vegetables such as bok choy (Chinese cabbage), snap peas, carrots and bean sprouts; brown rice; and a dish of lychee fruit.

**Italian:** Minestrone (a hearty, tomato-based soup with vegetables and pasta) with kidney beans; gnocchi (flour or potato dumplings)

with chopped vegetables including spinach mixed into the dough and served with tomato sauce.

**Greek:** Tzatziki sauce (a creamy dressing of low-fat yogurt, garlic and cucumber) served on pita sandwiches or as a dip with vegetables; and dolmas (grape leaves stuffed with ground meat, vegetables such as bell peppers, eggplant and squash, rice, dried fruit and pine nuts).

**Mexican:** Jicama (a crisp and slightly sweet root vegetable) peeled, sliced and served on a salad with lime vinaigrette or chopped for a crunchy addition to salsas; and gazpacho (a cold tomato-based raw vegetable soup) made with spinach or cucumbers.



For tips to add culture and variety to your plate visit [https://www.eatrightpro.org/-/media/feature/eatright/campaign/nnm2021/tip\\_sheets/smart-tips-for-personalizing-your-plate-tip-sheet\\_final\\_012621.pdf?](https://www.eatrightpro.org/-/media/feature/eatright/campaign/nnm2021/tip_sheets/smart-tips-for-personalizing-your-plate-tip-sheet_final_012621.pdf?)

# READING RULES!

Reading is the most crucial academic skill for our children because it is the foundation for learning. Before and during third grade children are learning to read. After third grade kids read to learn. Unfortunately, three quarters of children who are poor readers in third grade will remain poor readers in high school, according to researchers at Yale University. In fact, the National Research Council states that “academic success, as defined by high school graduation, can be predicted by knowing someone’s reading skill at the end of third grade. A person who is not at least a modestly skilled reader by that time is unlikely to graduate from high school.”

Reading should rule as the number one learning skill for our children. Without a strong foundation in reading, children get left behind at the beginning of their school years causing them to become behind in every class, year after year. By the end of third grade, 74 percent of struggling readers won’t ever catch up. Reading is the skill used to get information from books, computers, and boards to learn math, science, literature, social studies and more.

So as teachers, parents, and caregivers, we must stress the importance of reading and encourage our children to become skilled, good readers. The golden rule for reading is to

incorporate reading to our kids daily for 20 minutes. Just this time each day can teach most school readiness skills (e.g., vocabulary, counting, colors, social skills, etc.). Other additional significant benefits to daily reading are that it can build social and emotional confidence and empower parents and caregivers to become the first and most influential teachers for their children.

For more reading tips for parents and caregivers, please visit the Family Network on Disabilities site at <https://fndusa.org/esedownload/reading-tips-for-parents/>



# COVID-19 RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

Do you struggle with getting foods rich in nutrients like fruits and vegetables? Do you often run out of food or buy less healthy food to ensure there is enough to go around? This is a problem for many Alabama residents, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, however the following resources may help you and your family:



- **Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** is a supplemental nutrition program for pregnant women, breastfeeding women, women who had a baby within the last 6 months, infants, and children under 5 years old. Visit <https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/wic/> for more information.
- **The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** strives to end hunger by giving monthly benefits to eligible low-income households. Check out <https://mydhr.alabama.gov/> to learn more and apply.
- **The Alabama Child Nutrition Program** offers nutritious meals through programs such as the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program to children and sometimes their families. Schools are doing even more to support communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Check with your local school to see what type of food assistance they offer during the school year.
- **Local Food pantries** offer free and reduced-priced food items for families in need or that do not qualify for food assistance programs. Visit <https://www.foodpantries.org/st/alabama> to find a food pantry near you.

# MANGO BANANA SMOOTHIE

Mangos are known as the king of fruits because it is the most consumed fruit in the world. The mango is classified as a stone fruit or drupe that belongs to a family of flowering plants known as *Anacardiaceae*, which also includes cashews and pistachios nuts. It is native to India and Southeast Asia where it has been cultivated for over 5,000 years! Mango is the national fruit of India, Pakistan and the Philippines. Below is a recipe for a nutritious, easy, and refreshing mango smoothie.

Makes: 4 servings

Ingredients:  
2 cups 1% or skim milk  
1 fresh mango, peeled, pit removed  
1 banana  
2 ice cubes

Instructions:

Put all ingredients into a blender. Blend until foamy.

Pour into 4 glasses and serve immediately.

Note: Instead of fresh mango you can use 1 cup frozen mango, or 4 Tbs 100% mango juice

For more nutritious and fruity beverages from Husky Nutrition at UConn Health from the SNAP Program Connecticut go to <https://www.snap4ct.org/drinks-and-smoothies.html>



**“Healthy citizens are the greatest asset any country can have” – Winston Churchill**



# NEWS AND EVENTS

## **ALABAMA EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE**

June 16 -17, 2021. Mobile Convention Center, Mobile, AL 36602. For more information see website [www.alabamaetc.com](http://www.alabamaetc.com)

## **NATIONAL HYDRATION DAY**

June 23, 2021. If you are a casual exerciser or someone who simply loves outside in the sun, drinking water is key to avoiding heat stroke, dehydration, and other dangerous issues. Great way to promote hydration awareness. For more information see website <https://nationaltoday.com/national-hydration-day/>

## **OBESITY TASK FORCE VIRTUAL MEETING**

June 24, 2021 @ 1-2 p.m. For more information see website <https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/obesity/quarterly-meetings.html>

## **21ST CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS GRANT PROGRAM 2021 VIRTUAL SUMMER SYMPOSIUM**

July 20 - 22, 2021. For more information and to register see website <https://21stccclc.leadmci.com/>

## **NATIONAL RELAXATION DAY**

August 15, 2021. This day advocates chilling out and promotes stress relief. Managing stress requires relaxation, which leads to a clearer and calmer mind. The rule of the day is to avoid doing anything stressful. For more information see website <https://nationaltoday.com/national-relaxation-day>

## **BREAK FOR SUMMER MEALS**

Millions of American children do not receive the nutritious food they need. Because of the coronavirus pandemic, there is a projection of 1 in 4 kids who could possibly face a hunger crisis. While some of our children may receive free and reduced meals during the school year, all of our children need healthy food throughout the year for growth and development. During the summer, when schools are closed and the school meals disappear, the need is even greater to feed our kids.



To the rescue is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Simply known nationally as the Summer Meals Program (SMP), in Alabama it is called *Break for a Plate*. SMP provides kids and teens aged 18 years and younger in low-income areas two free meals each day. Program sites are considered eligible based on USDA requirements as determined by the Alabama State Department of Education.

Check out the SMP locator for *Break for a Plate* at <https://www.breakforaplate.com/about/> to get local sites available serving meals for our children during the summer break.