

# MEALS AND MORE



## OBSERVANCES:

- **Wear Red Day (Feb 3)**
- **World Cancer Day (Feb 4)**
- **Valentine's Day (Feb 14)**
- **President's Day (Feb 20)**
- **National Pancake Day (Feb 21)**
- **Black History Month**
- **American Heart Month**
- **National Cancer Prevention Month**
- **National Sweet Potato Month**
- **National Canned Food Month**
- **National Cherry Month**

**FEBRUARY  
2023**

## CHERRIES ARE GOOD FOR YOUR HEART

This month make cherries a part of your breakfast or lunch.

Sour, sweet, juice, canned, fresh, or dried are all delicious and nutritious.

New research links cherries' red color (provided by the fruit's powerful antioxidants - anthocyanins) to heart-health benefits related to reducing inflammation, total cholesterol, and belly fat.

And, add some cherries to your pancakes this Feb 21st and celebrate National Pancake Day!

# AMERICAN HEART MONTH



Heart disease kills an estimated 630,000 Americans each year. It's the leading cause of death for both men and women. In the United States, the most common type of heart disease is coronary artery disease (CAD), which can lead to a heart attack. You can greatly reduce your risk for CAD through lifestyle changes and, in some cases, medication. So, what is one lifestyle change you can make this month to reduce your risk?

## TRY EATING MINDFULLY!

If you want to put healthier eating habits on the menu, mindfulness may be a simple and effective place to start! It's not about dieting or restrictions - it's about taking a moment to take it in. Try these easy ways to incorporate mindful eating into your day, so you can Eat Smart at every meal:

**Ponder:** Check in with yourself about your hunger before you eat - you may actually be thirsty, bored or stressed.

**Appraise:** Take a moment to take it in. How does it smell? Do you really want it? Is it more than you need?

**Slow:** Slow down so your brain can keep up with your stomach. Put your fork down between bites and focus on the flavor.

**Savor:** Enjoy your food. Take a moment to savor the satisfaction of each bite - the taste, texture, everything!

**Stop:** Stop when you're full - there's no need to join the clean plate club if it means overeating.



## NATIONAL CANNED FOOD MONTH

Eat more fruits and vegetables during NATIONAL CANNED FOOD MONTH!

An easy way to eat more fruits and vegetables is opening up cans! Canned fruits and vegetables are easy to enjoy, require very little preparation, and are packed with vitamins and minerals. Look for fruits canned in their own juice and look for vegetables that are low-sodium.

# SPOTLIGHT ON CAREGIVERS

## Tips for Eating Healthy When You Are a Caregiver on the Go

Caregivers lead very busy lives. While caring for the needs of a senior loved one, caregivers frequently work full- or part-time and have children of their own. It's a juggling act that often requires setting priorities so everything that needs to be done in a day is accomplished.

When the schedule is hectic, one thing that is frequently sacrificed is a healthy diet. A caregiver might rely on convenience foods or a trip to the drive through window at a local fast-food restaurant. While that may make life a little easier, an unhealthy diet can take a toll on a caregiver's health.

Here are a few tips you might find useful:

- **Meal planning and prep:** Create a few months of menu plans that you can rotate through. There are many websites who have pre-planned menus and recipes you can use to save time (i.e. [thefamilyfreezer.com](http://thefamilyfreezer.com)). Next, pick one or two days a month to prep meals and freeze them. This is a project the kids can play a role in. It will help them develop healthy eating habits for when they are on their own.

- **Home delivered meals:** If you are a caregiver for a MOWWM client, you can qualify for home delivered meals too from us too. Check out our menu at [www.mealsonwheelswesternmichigan.org/meals-on-wheels](http://www.mealsonwheelswesternmichigan.org/meals-on-wheels)

- **Pre-packed snack bags:** If you live life on the go, grabbing a quick snack might give you the boost you need. Instead of hitting the vending machine or a fast-food counter, keep your car and your pantry stocked with pre-packaged, healthy snacks. It can be ones you create yourself or ones you buy. Almonds, walnuts, fresh veggies and hummus, kale chips, dried fruit, and yogurt are a few to consider.

- **Smoothies and protein shakes:** Make and freeze individual cups of smoothies and plant-based protein shakes. They are an easy grab and go meal for breakfast or lunch or an afternoon snack. Both provide you with a quick way to pump up the number of fruits and vegetables you are consuming too.

- **Healthiest fast food options:** The healthiest fast food options are the ones that you can be mindful in eating (see prior page). Start with the small size of the fast food and savor each bite. Make sure you order only what really sounds good and eat slowly. Adding vegetables or ordering plant-based options are great ways to increase nutrients but still eat on the go.

(adapted from [fivestarseniorliving.com](http://fivestarseniorliving.com))



## NUTRIENT OF THE MONTH: VITAMIN A

Vitamin A is important for normal vision, the immune system, reproduction, and growth and development. Vitamin A also helps your heart, lungs, and other organs work properly. Carotenoids are pigments that give yellow, orange, and red fruits and vegetables their color. Your body is able to convert some carotenoids into vitamin A. Here are four health benefits from eating foods with vitamin A (like sweet potatoes - see recipes on the next page!):

1. Protects Your Eyes From Night Blindness and Age-Related Decline
2. May Lower Your Risk of Certain Cancers
3. Supports a Healthy Immune System
4. Supports Bone Health

**RECIPE:** Microwaved Sweet Potatoes

<b>PREP TIME:</b> 2 minutes	<b>COOK TIME:</b> Varies	<b>SERVING SIZE:</b> 1 serving
<b>INGREDIENTS:</b> • 1 sweet potato	<b>DIRECTIONS:</b> 1. Prick and wrap in wet paper towel: Rinse the potato, removing any attached tendrils. Prick it all over with a fork and wrap it in a wet paper towel. 2. Cook, flip, then cook again: Microwave on High power using the following chart for timing, making sure to flip and continue cooking on the second side: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Small (6 to 8 ounces, 2" thick): 2 to 3 minutes per side</li> <li>o Medium (9 to 12 ounces, 2" thick): 3 to 4 minutes per side</li> <li>o Large (13 to 16 ounces, 3" thick): 4 to 5 minutes per side</li> <li>o Extra Large (1 ¼ pound, 3" thick): 6 to 7 minutes per side</li> </ul> 3. Assess doneness and continue if necessary: Prick both sides to assess doneness, taking care because it is hot. If the fork goes in all the way with no give, it is done. Otherwise, continue cooking at 1-minute intervals until tender. 4. Once slightly cooled, cut in half and add toppings: Try adding chili for a savory taste, or a little brown sugar for a sweet taste.	



**DID YOU KNOW?**

In our Home-Delivered Meal Room, we scoop, seal, and freezer over 3,000 meals each weekday! And we deliver to nearly 2,000 homebound seniors in Kent and Allegan counties each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday!

**If you would like to know more about our home-delivered meals, pantry, or dining site programs, please call Meals On Wheels Western Michigan at 616-459-3111 or go to [www.mealsonwheelswesternmichigan.org](http://www.mealsonwheelswesternmichigan.org)**

Meals on Wheels Western Michigan is supported by:

