

MEALS AND MORE



OBSERVANCES:

- Daylight Savings Time (March 10)
- Ramadan (March 10- April 8)
- St. Patrick's Day (March 17)
- National Poultry Day (March 19)
- World Water Day (March 22)
- MOWWM Community Walk/5K Run (March 24)
- National Spinach Day (March 26)
- Easter (March 31)
- National Nutrition Month
- National Bell Pepper Month
- National Broccoli Month
- National Berries and Cherries Month
- National Kidney Month

**MARCH
2024**

MARCH IS NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH!

This year's theme inspires us to look Beyond the Table when thinking about our health and the environment. Choices we make daily, including what we're going to eat and drink, can make a big difference — both now and in the future. Our food choices also can affect the health of our planet. Have you ever thought about the work that goes into producing the foods we eat? This includes how food is grown or raised, where and how it is made, as well as its safety.

WHAT IS PLANT-BASED EATING?

One way to think “Beyond The Table” is to adopt a plant-based eating style. Although the popularity of eating plant-based has grown, this term currently lacks a formal definition in the United States. In the past, plant-based was often used to describe a vegetarian or vegan diet. More recently, plant-based has been used to describe an eating style that includes more foods that come from plants, like fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts and seeds. It’s also a term that may be used in the marketing of a food, like dairy alternatives and meat substitutes. People may choose to consume more plant-based foods for a variety of reasons:

- Health benefits associated with eating more fruits and vegetables which have been shown to prevent some disease and control negative health consequences of some diseases.
- Concerns for the environment as growing plants for food burden the environment less than raising animals for food
- A potential for lower grocery bills and food costs, for example, a meatless chili using dried beans is less expensive than a chili containing meat or a textured meat substitute.

Just because a product is plant-based doesn’t necessarily mean it is healthier. Premade plant-based foods and beverages can vary in the nutrition

they provide. While a variety of nutrients can be obtained from plant-based foods, this type of eating style may require some additional planning to make sure that you are getting all the vitamins, minerals, and protein you need. It will depend on your overall food intake and what foods are being replaced with plant-based sources. The Nutrition Facts Label is a helpful tool to determine if a food or beverage is the right choice for you. This is especially true for dairy alternatives. As an example, some plant-based beverages only provide a small amount of protein. Plus, if it’s flavored, there may be added sugars. According to MyPlate, only fortified versions of soymilk and soy yogurt are considered part of the Dairy Group, since the nutrition they provide is similar to cow’s milk.

To get started with a plant-based eating style, focus on ways to add more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. For example:

- Designate a certain night or nights for meatless meals.
- Try substituting some or all of the meat in recipes with plant-based sources of protein, such as beans, tofu, tempeh or unsalted nuts and seeds.
- Include more vegetables and fruit without added sugars or salt in meals

For more information visit eatright.org

NUTRIENT OF THE MONTH: AMINO ACIDS

Amino acids are the building blocks of protein in your body and in protein-rich foods, like meat, eggs, dairy, beans, and some vegetables, like peas and grains, like quinoa.

Your body needs 20 different kinds of amino acids to function correctly. These 20 amino acids combine in different ways to make proteins in your body. Your body makes hundreds of amino acids, but it can’t make nine of the amino acids you need. These are called essential amino acids. You must get them from the food you eat.

What do amino acids do?

Break down food.



Grow and repair body tissue.



Make hormones and brain chemicals.



Provide an energy source.



Maintain healthy skin, hair and nails.



Build muscle.



Boost your immune system.



Sustain a normal digestive system.



SPOTLIGHT ON CAREGIVERS

Caregiving can be physically and emotionally exhausting. Whether you are in the profession of caregiving or taking care of a loved one, it is important to remember to recharge your batteries. For family members, caregiving can also lead to additional pressures, such as financial strain, family conflict, and social withdrawal. Over time, caregiver stress can lead to burnout, a condition marked by irritability, fatigue, problems with sleep, weight gain, feelings of helplessness or hopelessness, and social isolation.

Caregiver burnout is an example of how repeated exposure to stress harms mental and physical health. Chronic stress triggers a release of stress hormones in the body, which can lead to exhaustion, irritability, a weakened immune system, digestive distress, headaches, pains, and weight gain, especially in the midsection of the body.

Your body does have a natural way to combat stress. The counter-stress system is called the “relaxation response,” regulated by the parasympathetic nervous system. You can purposefully activate the relaxation response through mind-body practices like yoga, tai chi, meditation, and deep relaxation techniques.

Lack of time or energy can make getting that time away particularly challenging. You may even feel guilty or selfish for paying attention to your own needs. What you need to know is this: in fact, practicing self-care allows the caregiver to remain more balanced, focused, and effective, which helps everyone involved.

Practice simple breath awareness for 10 minutes a day.

One of the simplest deep relaxation techniques is breath awareness. Here is one you can try:

- Find a comfortable seated position on a chair or cushion.
- Close your eyes and begin to notice your breath.
- It is common to have distracting thoughts come and go, but just let them pass, and gently bring your attention back to your breath.
- Breathe in slowly through your nose for five counts, hold and pause for five counts,* and exhale for five counts.
- Continue for 10 minutes. You may substitute phrases for the counts such as:
I breathe in calm and relaxing energy.
I pause to let the quiet energy relax my body.
I breathe out and release any anxious or tense energy.
- For deeper relaxation, gradually extend your exhalation, until you reach an exhalation twice the length of the inhalation (10 counts).

*Breathing exercises should not be painful or uncomfortable; if holding your breath is uncomfortable, just eliminate the pause between the inhalation and exhalation.

This article was adapted from an original article by Dr. Marlynn Wei. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/self-care-for-the-caregiver>



Check out the new resource from Caring.com
<https://www.caring.com/resources/nutrition-guide-for-seniors/>

RECIPE: Roasted Red Pepper Tomato Sauce

PREP TIME:
10 minutes

COOK TIME:
6 minutes

SERVING SIZE:
1/2 cup Serves: 4

INGREDIENTS:

- 1/2 cup roasted red peppers
- 1 garlic clove
- 1/2 cup low-sodium tomato sauce
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon dried Italian seasonings
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper chili flakes

DIRECTIONS:

1. Drain red peppers and measure 1/2 cup, (approximately 2 whole peppers).
2. Place peppers and garlic in food processor or blender and process until smooth.
3. Add tomato sauce, olive oil and Italian seasonings. Process until well blended. Ready to use on pizza, pasta or as a replacement for tomato sauce in recipes.
4. May be refrigerated 2 to 3 days or frozen until ready to use.

- Red peppers are available bottled, canned or fresh. Compare roasted red peppers and select the brand lowest in sodium or make from fresh peppers.
- Adjust red pepper chili flakes according to desire for hot and spicy flavor.
- This lower potassium, low sodium sauce can be used as a substitute for tomato sauce in a variety of dishes. Try it on pizza, pasta, rice or as a topping for chicken.

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MEALS ON WHEELS WESTERN MICHIGAN
2024 MARCH FOR MEALS
COMMUNITY WALK & 5K RUN
SUNDAY, MARCH 24 - 10:00 AM
2-MILE WALK & 5K RUN @ MILLENNIUM PARK
ALL AGES & ABILITIES WELCOME * DOG FRIENDLY



Join Us! MOWWM invites you to the 3rd annual March for Meals Community Walk & 5k Run on Sunday, March 24 at Millennium Park in Grand Rapids! Packet pick-up and festivities start at 9:00 am at Grant Pavilion, with the walk starting at 10:15 am. We are also adding a virtual option for those unable to attend in person, which will be just as fun! Come support the health and independence of older adults in person or online! This 2-mile walk and 5k run supports all ages and abilities. Dogs are welcome!

If you are currently receiving MOWWM services and are interested in participating, please contact Lydia at 616-459-3111 ext. 139 to get free registration!

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



Meals on Wheels Western Michigan is supported by:

