



EAT RIGHT MONTANA

A coalition promoting healthy eating and active lifestyles

www.eatrightmontana.org

October 2009

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the October issue of Eat Right Montana's campaign: *Going Green: Simple Steps for Montana Families*. Our tenth issue for 2009 covers several fall topics. In this month's packet, you'll find easy tips for getting involved in **walking to/from/at school, healthy habits to fight the flu, safe routes to school, and greener Halloween celebrations**. For lots of fun fall ideas, check out these features:

Media Release:

School Walking Programs Benefit Montana Students and Teachers

Healthful Eating:

Smart Habits to Stay Well during Flu Season

October Recipe:

Beef Stuffed Peppers

Active Lifestyles:

Smart Reasons to Walk and Bike to School with Children

Eco-Tips:

Fun Ways to Fashion a Greener (and Healthier) Halloween

Each monthly packet involves contributions from several ERM members with *many hands making light work*. This month, we had some very special help from dietetic intern **Jennifer Odermann**, MSU graduate student **Jennifer Nerison**, and Yellowstone County Extension agent **Bernie Mason**. **THANKS TO ONE and ALL!!**

We welcome comments and suggestions. Wherever possible, we want to incorporate your ideas and input into our monthly packets. Just send your thoughts to me at EatRightMT2000@gmail.com - and remember, past issues of **Healthy Families** and other ERM materials are available on the ERM web site at www.eatrightmontana.org/.

Dayle Hayes, MS, RD

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Crystelle Fogle 406-947-2344 | Katie Bark 406-994-5641 | Mary Ann Harris 406-994-5397

Going Green: Simple Steps for Healthy Families 2009



CONTACT: Crystelle Fogle, MBA, RD 406-947-2344

MT Department of Public Health & Human Services

October 1, 2009

School Walking Programs Benefit Montana Students and Teachers

Walking to school is certainly a proud Montana tradition. We've all heard stories about how far our forefathers had to walk and how high the snowdrifts were back then. Unfortunately, like youngsters all across the US, Montana students rarely get to and from school under their own power anymore.

"Thirty years ago, most students who lived near a school walked or rode their bikes year round," explains Cathy Costakis, Physical Activity Coordinator with Montana's Nutrition and Physical Activity Program (www.montanapna.org/). "As families began driving children to school, traffic congestion and safety issues became problems in school zones and children missed out on a natural way to get a daily dose of outdoor activity. The good news for students and teachers is that Montana schools are using creative programs to encourage walking before, during, and after the school day."

For several years, Montanans have joined millions around the world in celebrating International Walk to School Day on the first Wednesday in October. Seventeen schools - from Billings to Vaughn - have registered their 2009 events online at www.walktoschool.org/. On October 7th, thousands of Montana families will again reap the old-fashioned benefits of using their legs for school transportation.

"Walking or biking to school is really a win-win-win situation," says Costakis. "First, there are serious health benefits. Kids, and the adults who accompany them, get the physical activity they need for optimal health and well-being. Secondly, there are academic benefits because children who are fit and healthy are ready to learn. And, finally, there are environmental benefits. When more kids get to school under their own power, it reduces traffic and vehicle emissions, especially in school zones."

According to Costakis, there are many different types of successful walking programs across Big Sky country. Here are three examples:

- **Lavina School (K-12):** For four years, teachers and students have walked together for 15-20 minutes every day of the school year, mostly outside on the track. Walking has become so routine that once when they tried to skip it, the kids said "We can't go to class yet, we're not awake, we have to go walk."
- **Helena, Jefferson Elementary:** *Walk-to-School Day* celebrations have been going on here for nine years. Many community volunteers and elected officials join the fun, which includes a free breakfast for all the participants, donated helmets for any children using wheels, and safety demonstrations.
- **Fort Peck Community College Wellness Center:** *Walk-a-Mile-for-a-Backpack* has become an annual event in Brockton, Fraser, and Poplar, thanks to the Wellness Center and donations from local programs. This year in August, 375 children received backpacks filled with school supplies.

"This is an important time of year for all Montana drivers to focus on traffic safety around schools," notes Costakis. "If you are driving, pay attention to cross walks and crossing guards. Better still, leave the car at home and walk your children, grandkids, or neighborhood friends to and from school."

Past and current issues of Eat Right Montana's monthly packets can be downloaded for free at www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrighthealthyfamilies.htm

5 Smart Habits to Stay Well during Flu Season

Despite what you may see advertised, there are no miracle foods or vitamins that can help prevent or cure the H1N1 or any other flu. There are, however, plenty of smart things you can do to keep your family as healthy as possible this season.

1. Keep your hands clean.

One of the best ways to stay healthy is to wash your hands properly and frequently. Washing your hands well will help protect you from all germs, including seasonal flu and the H1N1 virus. Use soap and warm water - and wash for 15 to 20 seconds. When soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand wipes or gel sanitizers.

2. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables.

Produce is packed with the nutrients that your immune system needs to fight viruses and bacteria of all types. Go for all types of brightly colored fruits and veggies. They will have more of the disease-fighting antioxidants, like vitamin C and beta-carotene. Fresh, frozen, dried, canned in juice, and 100% juice can all offer health benefits.

3. Drink plenty of fluids.

Water is always a refreshing choice. Tea, especially antioxidant-rich green tea, can be a nice way to warm up and stay hydrated anytime. 100% orange or other juice is also good, but don't overdo it: A small glass a day is plenty. Drinking enough fluids (6 to 8 cups a day) will help keep your mucous membranes moist and able to fight off germs.

4. Choose nutrient-rich snacks.

During flu season, your body needs every drop of nutrition it can get, so don't waste your calories on 'empty' snacks. Skip the chips, cookies, and colas. Feed your body well with a variety of tasty nutrient-rich items. In addition to fruits and veggies, go for sunflower seeds, nuts (almonds, walnuts, cashews, etc.), low-fat yogurt, and beef jerky.

5. Consider a multi-vitamin/mineral supplement.

This is the right time of year for a little extra nutrition insurance, a basic vitamin/mineral pill with 100% of the Daily Value (DV) for most nutrients. Although super-expensive supplements with mega-doses are mostly a waste of your money, you may want to look for a supplement with 1000 IUs of vitamin D. While the DV is still 400 IUs, many experts are recommending an increase for optimal health and well-being.



Beef Stuffed Peppers

Ingredients:

- 4 large green bell peppers
- 1/2 pound lean ground beef, ground round
- 1/4 cup finely chopped onion
- 1 cup cooked rice
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon paprika
- 1/4 teaspoon celery seeds
- 1/4 teaspoon curry powder
- Dash Worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 cup soft bread crumbs

YIELD: 4 peppers (4 servings)

Instructions:

- 1) Wash peppers; remove stem ends, seeds, and white membranes.
- 2) Cook bell peppers in 1 cup of boiling lightly salted water for 4 to 5 minutes. Drain.
- 3) Brown ground beef with chopped onion, stirring to break up beef.
- 4) Add rice, salt, paprika, celery seeds, curry powder and Worcestershire sauce; mix well.
- 5) Fill peppers with meat mixture and top each with crumbs.
- 6) Bake stuffed peppers at 350° for 30 minutes.

Substitutions/Additions:

- Use a variety of pepper colors - green, red, orange, yellow, and purple.
- Substitute other ground meats, such as ground turkey, pork, venison, or elk.
- Use brown rice or substitute other cooked grains for rice, such as bulgur (cracked wheat), barley, or spelt.
- Use whole wheat or other whole grain bread crumbs.

Nutrition Analysis:

Serving Size: 1 pepper

Calories: 225

Total Fat: 5.5 g

Calories from Fat: 22%

Saturated Fat: 1.8 g

Trans Fat: 0.0 g

Total Carb: 25 g

Dietary Fiber: 4 g

Sodium: 373 mg

Protein: 19 g

Calcium: 43 mg

Iron: 2.5 mg

Recipe Source

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<http://southernfood.about.com/od/stuffedpepperrecipes/r/bl30118o.htm>

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5 Smart Reasons to Walk and Bike to School with Children

Getting to and from school on your own two feet offers real advantages to kids, adults, teachers, and the environment. Here are five major reasons why you should walk or bike to school with your children, grandchildren, or neighborhood friends:

1. Stronger bodies

Most school-aged kids in the US do not get the recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity. Taking 15 to 20 minutes to walk or bike to and from school is an easy way for kids to get at least half of their daily dose of activity. Being physically fit helps kids maintain a healthy weight and reduces their risk of high blood pressure and elevated cholesterol.

2. Smarter brains

Studies show a strong relationship between being physically fit and performing well in the classroom. Children who walk or bike to school are more likely to be fit and therefore to succeed academically. They arrive at school wide-awake and ready to learn each morning. Walking home from school is also a great way to get kids' brains ready for homework.

3. Better relationships

Walking and talking is a wonderful way to connect with kids and to find out what is going on in their lives. Children often feel less intimidated about sharing stuff with adults in an 'open' setting. Walking to and from school can also be good for sibling relationships and neighborhood friendships - giving children an easy time to talk with each other.

4. Safer communities

When parents, grandparents, and other adults walk with some children, all children are safer. Walking school buses - where responsible adults walk and pick up children along a specific route - are a solution when family members are not available. When fewer children are driven to school, it also reduces potentially dangerous traffic in school zones.

5. Cleaner environments

Surveys show that 20 to 30 percent of morning traffic is cars taking children to school. This means that 20 to 30 percent of vehicle emissions also come from these same cars. When more children walk and bike to school, it improves air quality, especially in school zones. While this is important for all children, it is critical for those with asthma.

5 Fun Ways to

Fashion a Greener (and Healthier) Halloween

Halloween is a wonderful excuse to have fall fun with children. Use these simple ideas to reduce the mounds of paper and plastic trash from a typical celebration. They'll also make this year's Halloween friendlier to the environment and to your pocketbook.

1. Fashion a Halloween party of your own.

Skip all the treat-or-trick worries about children's safety and managing those gigantic piles of candy. Plan a neighborhood party at your home or larger event in a community facility. Have fun with old-fashioned, yet trendy activities and games, such as carving pumpkins (or squash) or Pin-the-Tail on the scarecrow (or donkey, if you want to be traditional).

2. Fashion costumes from reused/recyclable stuff.

Start with the basics: a pair of tights and a turtleneck. Then, convert a large cardboard box into a computer, TV, or colorful toy block with a little paint. Use twigs, flowers, leaves, and a green sheet to dress up as Mother Nature. Make masks with paper mache and dig through your closets for costumes. Pick up extra costume pieces at garage sales or second hand stores.

3. Fashion decorations from nature.

Decorate with nature: leaves, sticks, wheat, gourds, sunflowers, and other fall items create a wonderful atmosphere (and they can be composted afterwards). Make a scarecrow using old clothes stuffed with other old clothes or newspaper (reused plastic grocery bags can help prevent soggy stuffing). You can always add straw to the edges for the authentic touch.

4. Fashion trash into Halloween décor.

Make luminaries out of used tin cans: use a large nail and a hammer to punch out designs, paint the outside, and add some sand to hold a small candle. Turn glass bottles into candle holders and plastic containers into Halloween creatures like cats, ghosts, and pumpkins. Old sheets hung from ceilings or trees make good ghosts (wash and use for cleaning up later).

5. Fashion seasonal foods into party treats.

Purchase seasonal ingredients from your farmer's market. Use pumpkin or squash for soups, breads, and muffins. Enjoy fall greens like baby spinach, with dried cranberries and nuts for a delicious salad. Slice local apples and dip in fat-free caramel or peanut butter. Challenge guests to make edible creatures with apple slices, PB, raisins, grated cheese, and other items.