

February is
American Heart
Month: The Heart
of Eating

National Wise
Consumer Month:
Getting the Most
for Your Money

In the Spotlight

Fresh & Healthy:
Recipes of the Month

Starting a
Weight-Loss
Challenge

February is American Heart Month:

The Heart of Eating

The home, community, workplace and school all have a strong influence on individual food choices. To help you and your family choose healthy food it is important to think about how the environment influences food choices. Some aspects of the environment make it easier to eat well such as spending quality time together with your family or friends and having a healthy meal without the TV or other distractions.

Other aspects can include:

- A variety of food from the food groups available such as ready-to-eat fresh fruit, yogurt, vegetables and dip, and low-sugar cereals with milk.
- The supermarkets offer pre-washed, ready-to-eat vegetables, which make it easier for people to include nutritious foods in their diet.
- Nutrition Facts on the food labels help people make informed choices.
- The changing cultural profile of the country encourages the availability of a variety of ethnically diverse foods and cuisines.

The environment can also create challenges to eating well:

- People have less time to shop for food, prepare meals and eat with their families.
- We're regularly exposed to many different and sometimes conflicting nutritional messages.
- Convenient and calorie-dense foods are readily available at all times and everywhere.



Family and peers also influence the way people eat. Taking the time to enjoy your family and friends as well as your meals together helps to make eating pleasurable and assist in a healthy attitude toward food.

Eating healthy makes you feel better and will also reduce your risk of heart disease. Eating healthy is more about what to eat rather than what not to eat. Despite the challenges to eating well, it is possible for people to adopt healthy eating practices. My Pyramid (www.mypyramid.gov) gives practical tips about healthy eating for children, teens, adults and seniors from all cultural groups and offers personalized eating plans, and interactive tools to help you plan and assess your food choices.

Resource: www.mypyramid.gov



National Wise Consumer Month: *Getting the Most for Your Money*

With a tightening economy, you may be considering purchasing home exercise equipment in lieu of paying a monthly gym membership. Take heed, with multi-billion dollars sales annually, the fitness equipment industry is very adept at marketing their products, which makes your job as a wise consumer even more challenging. To avoid purchasing another expensive clothes hanger, here are some tips for choosing the right exercise equipment.

1. **Determine your goals:** Before making an investment, take the time to consider your fitness goals and be honest with your self. Whether you want to build strength, increase flexibility, improve endurance or just improve your general health, look for equipment that helps you achieve your personal goals. And consider whether you can really be motivated to work out at home.
2. **Try before you buy:** Put on your workout duds and visit a store that specializes in fitness equipment. Break a sweat “trying on” the equipment. The goal is to find something you like to do. Whether it’s a treadmill, step machine or a stationary bicycle, if you enjoy the exercise you will be more likely to stick with it in the long run. If you have friends who own home equipment, ask if you can try it out.
3. **One machine can’t do it all:** Most exercise equipment is designed to work specific body parts, not the entire body. You can’t achieve fitness or weight loss by isolating one body part, and no exercise device can spot reduce or burn fat off a particular part of the body. If you plan to purchase just one piece of equipment, make sure to supplement your workout with other exercises that provide the necessary aerobic conditioning, strength training or stretching. Be wary of any ads that promise “total,” “easy” or “effortless” results.
4. **Consider your space:** Think about where you plan to put your equipment. Be sure to check for adequate ventilation, electrical outlets, and floor space. Be realistic, are you going to drag the equipment out each time you want to use it or is there some place where it will be readily accessible? Are you more likely to use the equipment if you can watch TV at the same time?
5. **Shop around:** Set a budget and purchase the highest quality equipment you can afford. Sure, there are plenty of cheap pieces of equipment to choose from but you get what you pay for when you purchase cheap cardio equipment. Quality home exercise equipment costs more, but it’s worth it. Take time to do the research and check out fitness and consumer magazines that rate exercise equipment. Visit several stores, including specialty fitness shops with knowledgeable salespeople who can help answer your questions, but don’t just rely on the salesperson’s opinion. Read the fine print before you buy. Make sure you get all of the details on assembly, warranties, delivery service and return policies.

http://www.acefitness.org/fitfacts/fitfacts_display.aspx?itemid=146

http://www.acefitness.org/fitfacts/fitfacts_display.aspx?itemid=80

In the Spotlight

In the spring of 2006, Valencia Community College (VCC) kicked off their Employee Wellness program by offering Weight Watcher's at Work on four of their six campuses and a variety of unique exercise classes for employees, such as Belly Dancing, Yoga and Tai Chi. To date they have lost well over 3 tons of weight. They added additional classes in 2007-08 including Step Aerobics, Golf, Body Morph, Boot Camp, Salsa and Key-Chain Self-Defense.

VCC's annual Employee Wellness Fair focuses on seven components of wellness: physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, social, occupational, and environmental. Vendors are organized by the most appropriate category and employees are encouraged with incentives to visit vendors in all seven components.

VCC provides monthly health and wellness presentations on two of the six campuses on topics such as stress management, heart disease, cancer prevention, men's health, healthy holidays, and second-hand smoke. In 2008, they kicked off the American Lung Association's "Freedom From Smoking" smoking cessation program and will be repeating the program at a second campus in 2009.



Fresh & Healthy

Recipe of the Month

Applesauce Oatmeal Muffins

Ingredients:

1-cup old fashion rolled oats
(not instant)
1-cup non-fat milk
1-cup whole-wheat flour
½ cup brown sugar
½ cup unsweetened
applesauce
2 egg whites
1 tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. baking soda
½ tsp. salt
1 tsp. cinnamon
1 tsp. sugar
Raisins or nuts (optional)



Instructions:

Soak the oats in milk for about one hour. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.

Spray muffin pan with cooking spray. Mix the applesauce and egg whites with the oat mixture. In a separate bowl, measure and whisk the dry ingredients together.

Add wet ingredients to dry and mix just until all ingredients are wet. Do not over mix the batter or the muffins will be tough. Add nuts or raisins if desired. Spoon muffin mixture into the muffin pan. Combine the cinnamon and sugar and top each muffin with some of the mixture. Bake for 20-25 minutes or until done. Remove from pan, cool and enjoy.

These can be frozen and reheated in the microwave for a quick breakfast. Serves 12.

Other healthy add-ins: Core and chop 2 apples and add to batter; Top muffins with walnuts or pecans.

Nutritional Information per serving:

Calories: 94; Total fat: .5g; Sat. Fat: .1g; Chol: .4g; Carbs: 21g; Fiber: 2 g; Sugar: 1g; Protein: 3g; Sodium: 196 mg; Potassium: 71mg.

Starting a Weight-Loss Challenge



Did you know that getting physically active is as easy as the Cha-cha-cha? Whether you're the cheerleader for your workplace or you and some friends are just trying to lose some pounds, a weight-loss challenge is ideal for motivating change.

The hit TV show, *The Biggest Loser*, has inspired many office and work groups to start their own version of the competition to lose weight and get in shape. Often these workplace contests fail to really provide the motivation and accountability needed to achieve lasting weight loss results. However, here are some tips that can make your workplace challenge successful. By following these suggestions, you can be on your way to becoming "The Biggest Loser" in your office!

- Make it a TEAM effort.** The first big rule of creating an office Biggest Loser competition is to create teams. Every participant must be accountable and having a team is very important for personal accountability. If your workplace is like most, snacks and leftovers find their way to a central location where people can mindlessly nosh all day long. Having team members, as well as opposing team members, watching, really keeps mindless munching at bay. If you are in the competition only for yourself, you will be much more likely to indulge. Being accountable to other people is key.
 - Make the weigh-in public knowledge.** You don't have to post actual weights but whether or not contestants went up or down in weight each week (and how much) should be displayed publicly in the office. This provides yet another aspect of accountability and motivation. Now you are not only accountable to the people participating in *The Biggest Loser*, but also your co-workers who are not. A chart should be created to track the weekly progress of each team member based on the percentage of weight lost, with team totals appearing as well. Having the entire office in on the action, not just those participating in the actual weight loss, adds volumes to individual motivation
 - Have a witness.** One trusted member of the office, preferably one who is not participating in the competition, should serve as a witness for each weigh-in. Participants should weigh-in at the same basic time on the same day each week. The witness can be in charge of recording the results and watching the numbers. This keeps any dishonesty from creeping in, and also adds yet another
- aspect of accountability as each competitor knows that only one person really will see that actual scale number displayed each week. It should also be established whether or not shoes should be removed, etc. before the competition begins.
- Something should be at stake.** In addition to having team members to keep you accountable, each participant should also have to put something up front in order to join the competition. A monetary amount will usually suffice. Having to pay \$25 or \$50 to join will keep those who are not motivated and who quit after 2 weeks out of the competition and can serve as prize money for the winners.
 - Have a set start and end date.** People can only get truly motivated to achieve a goal if they can see the finish line. Have a start date and an end date well established before beginning your Biggest Loser competition. Choose the length of time (8 -12 weeks) and start day and stick to it!
 - Have professional guidance.** While it's not economically feasible for most workplaces to have a Health Coach come in to do individual coaching sessions, there are many free resources for professional health and nutritional information as a BCBSF member. You have free access to a health coach who can help you learn more about eating well, staying fit, keeping track of your medicines and managing your symptoms.
- Health Dialog's Health Coach line – **1-877-789-2583** – is available to you 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Gauge progress and winners by percentage of weight lost.** Participants are really put off from competing when one team chooses their participants based on size. If you have two participants, one who is 220 lbs at the start of the competition and loses 22 lbs, and one who is 150 lbs and loses 15 lbs, then they are tied. Based on the percentage of weight lost, they both lost 10% of their total starting body weight. By using percentage instead of total pounds, all teams have an equal chance of being the Biggest Losers.
- The Biggest Loser* has been a huge weight loss motivator for many people. Just watching the show may be somewhat inspiring, but actually starting your own Biggest Loser competition at your office or other workplace can be great weight loss tool.



BlueCross BlueShield of Florida
An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association