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Eat right with color

Ithaca, Stanton, St. Johns- When it comes to eating healthier foods, the decision to do so is sometimes a lot easier than the act itself.

The problem, nutritionists say, is we tend to focus on what foods to avoid rather than what foods we need to stay healthy. Dieters end up feeling deprived and frustrated, and give up more often than not.

The key to healthier eating, according to nutritionists, is to select nutrient-rich foods and beverages that provide the most nutrients per calorie and, by doing so we create healthier eating habits and start down a path towards better health.

“Eating right doesn’t have to be complicated,” said Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) dietitian Angie Martin, who recommends people choose among these basic food groups first to ensure their bodies get the nutrients it needs:

- Brightly-colored fruits and 100% fruit juice
- Vibrantly-colored vegetables and potatoes
- Whole, fortified and fiber-rich grain foods, such as whole grain breads, cereals, brown rice, and whole wheat pasta
- Low-fat and fat-free milk, cheese and yogurt or fortified soy beverage. Lactose-free milk is also an option
- Lean meats, poultry, seafood, fish, eggs, beans and nuts

The American Dietetic Association’s “Eat right with color” campaign encourages consumers to include a colorful variety of these foods on their plates every day; an approach that serves as the foundation for a healthy eating plan.

Residents are also highly encouraged to eat more fruits and vegetables at every eating opportunity. “Under the U.S. government’s food guidelines, adults need anywhere from 7-13 servings of produce daily to get all the health benefits of fruits and vegetables,” said Martin, “including protection against obesity, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and cancer.” Martin cautions against letting this large number of recommended servings become too overwhelming. Instead, she suggests people start out in small ways, such as taking fruits and vegetables along in the car for an on-the-go snack, as well as adding more to each meal.

Those who need additional guidance when it comes to making wise food choices should visit www.mypyramid.gov for personalized eating plans, tips on how to make smart food choices, and more. Another site worth visiting is www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org. Here you will find recipes, serving ideas and shopping advice for busy moms and dads. It also includes activities and tips for getting children to try different varieties of fruits and vegetables.

The important thing to remember is that it’s never too late to take steps toward a healthy lifestyle and that one way to get there is to “Eat right with color!”

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties
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