March 2014

Wellness Quick Read

From The Solutions Group Wellness Team

National Nutrition Month®

Make a nutritional goal for yourself during the month of March to honor National Nutrition Month®

Some examples:

- Create more colorful meals—think fruits & veggies
- Switch to low-fat dairy options
- Add seafood to your diet at least twice a week (and cut back on red meat)
- Consume whole grains over refined grains
- Eat from smaller plates to reduce portion sizes
- Eat breakfast everyday

Start Your Day for Success

Did you eat breakfast this morning? The fact is, many Americans skip breakfast citing lack of appetite, a rushed morning routine, and even the thought that skipping a meal will aide in weight loss. Starting your day with a *healthy and nutritious* breakfast should be a priority. The key words being healthy and nutritious; while you may count your bacon covered donut as your breakfast meal, it is not providing your body with the nutrients needed to sustain your daily activities.

Aim to consume a balanced breakfast with whole grains, a lean protein source, fruits and vegetables (think MyPlate) and water is a good morning addition to your diet. A balanced breakfast including those food groups will provide your body with protein and fiber to help keep you feeling full as well as maintaining steady blood sugar levels. Jump starting your day with breakfast can even help aide in weight loss/maintenance. Still not convinced? Breakfast eaters also report better concentration and productivity throughout the day as well as improved healthy choices.

To help with the rush of the morning, prepare easy grab-and-go meals on the weekends. Some ideas include baked oatmeal, muesli, hard boiled eggs, and stock up on single serving low-fat yogurts. Morning smoothies are also an easy way to sneak added fruits and vegetables into your diet (add with low-fat plain yogurt for calcium and protein).

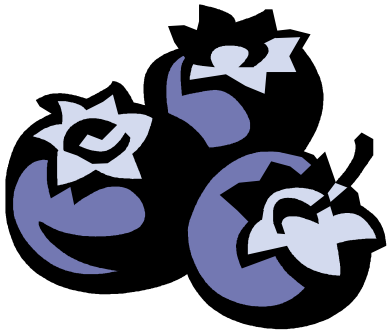
Lastly, if your chief complaint is lack of an appetite in the morning, then start small. Start by adding a hard boiled egg, cup of yogurt, or even a banana to your morning.

Speak with your doctor, dietitian, or qualified health professional before beginning any new exercise regimens or weight loss programs.

Tools for Activity Tracking

If you've tried weight loss, healthy eating and physical activity in the past but found no results, what could be missing? The answer, accountability. It's easy to "cheat" ourselves when we think no one else will know. Stop that behavior justification now and start holding yourself accountable. One of the best ways to implement diet and exercise change is to keep track of your daily behaviors. Create your own log or find one online to track the amount, type, and muscle targets of your activities. Same with diet, keep a daily diet log of not only the food you eat, but how much and if it was home-made or bought out. Once you start tracking you start to identify weak spots and areas to target for sustainable change. Some helpful tracking tools: myfitnesspal.com, supertracker.usda.gov, and fitday.com. Find the tool that best fits your life and start tracking today!

Recipe of the Month: Whole Wheat Pancakes



Serves 6

Ingredients:

1 cup whole wheat flour
1/4 cup all-purpose flour
1/3 cup uncooked Cream of Wheat (farina)
1/3 cup sugar
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 1/2 cups vanilla soy milk
1/4 cup applesauce
1 large egg, lightly beaten
1/2 cup coarsely chopped walnuts
(or whatever you enjoy in/topped on your pancakes...berries, nuts, seeds, dried fruit)

Directions:

Combine the whole wheat flour, all-purpose flour, Cream of Wheat, sugar, baking soda, baking powder, and salt in large bowl—whisk together. In a separate bowl, combine the milk, applesauce, and egg—stir until blended. Combine the two mixtures together, stirring until combined. Then, let the mixture stand for 5 minutes. Heat a griddle/skillet over medium heat and coat with non-stick spray. Spoon pancake batter onto pan and add toppings if desired. Flip pancake half-way through cooking. Once fully cooked remove from heat, top with desired toppings and enjoy!

Recipe Source: Cooking Light

Click here for this recipe and others like it: http://www.myrecipes.com/recipe/hearty-pancakes-10000000780384/

The Solutions Group

Is Your Sleep Deprivation Promoting Obesity

How many hours of sleep does your body need? Adults can vary in their sleep needs anywhere from 5-10 hours, however the average recommendation is 7-8 hours of sleep a night. If you have trouble waking up in the morning, feel drowsy throughout the day, or power your day constantly with caffeine, you may not be getting enough sleep.

Sleep deprivation over time can lead to serious health consequences such as increased risks for high blood pressure as well as inflammation—which is a contributor to various chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. Another connection to lack of sleep is obesity.

Regardless of your daytime healthy habits, if you are cutting yourself short on sleep you may actually be stimulating weight gain. Studies have shown actual changes in appetite regulating hormones, leading to an unnecessary increase in calorie consumption. A recent study in the Journal of Clinical Nutrition found a 22% increase in calorie consumption in a group with only 4 hours of sleep versus 8.

So, how can you add some extra zzz's back into your day? While physical activity is important to your overall health and sleep behaviors, it is recommended to avoid exercising 3-4 hours before bed. Your body's temperature can take up to 6 hours post-exercise to resume to normal. Another activity to avoid right before bed is artificial light, (such as tv or computer light) which can act as a stimulant to your mind and body. Alcohol, nicotine, and caffeine can all interfere with sleep habits. Lastly, try to keep to a sleep routine throughout the week.