

National Nutrition Month, Bite into a Healthy Lifestyle

Commentary by Cpt. Kelly Kaim EACH Dietician



March may be known for the NCAA basketball tournament "March Madness," but it is also a month recognized as National Nutrition Month. National Nutrition Month is an annual campaign providing information and education to raise awareness on making healthy food and lifestyle choices. This year the theme is "Bite into a Healthy Lifestyle" focusing on the idea that if we make informed decisions on what we put into our body and get regular exercise we are on our way to promoting overall health and decreasing the risk of chronic disease.

For many people, this is about the time of year when our New Year's resolutions have been forgotten and old habits start to creep back into daily routines. Don't be one of these people; instead use this month to educate yourself on healthy habits you can adopt to bring you closer to your health and fitness goals. For the next month, the dietitians at Evans Army Community Hospital encourage you to do just this by offering the below weekly nutrition challenges for you to do at home with your family, which will also be posted on the Evans' Facebook page. We also invite you to check out one of our various classes we offer including weight management, cholesterol control, commissary tour, and healthy cooking. For more information on these classes, call the Nutrition Care Division at 526-7290.

WEEK 1:

Challenge 1: Nothing out of a package consumed this week can contain more than 5 ingredients. The more ingredients a product is the more processed it is and the less nutrients you are getting.

Challenge 2: Avoid any foods that contain high fructose corn syrup this week. High Fructose has no nutritional value and simply contributes empty calories to the diet.

Challenge 3: Avoid foods that have partially hydrogenated listed on ingredient list this week. This is another name for TRANS Fat which is the worst kind of fat for you and shouldn't be in the diet at all.

WEEK 2:

Challenge 1: All Grains consumed this week must be 100% whole grain, no refined grains. If whole is not in front of the grain or wheat in the ingredients you are missing out on a lot of the fiber and nutrients.

Challenge 2: At least half your plate at every meal this week should be fruits and vegetables. Having half your plate come from "whole" foods is going to help you meet your vitamin and mineral intake for the day and also feel you up without all the added calories.

Challenge 3: No fried foods this week. Fried foods contain a lot of unwanted fat and calories and don't keep you full.

WEEK 3:

Challenge 1: Record all foods and beverages you consume this week in a 7 day food log. Food logs are a great way to give you an idea of how your nutrient intakes compare to recommendations based on individual goals. Myfitnesspal.com is a great application to use for this.

Challenge 2: No artificially sweetened sugars can be consumed this week eg) nutrasweet, splenda, aspartame, etc. These are chemically manufactured products that don't exist in nature and since they are relatively new to the market we are still uncertain the long term effects of excessive use.

Challenge 3: Prepare all dinner meals at home this week. Preparing your meals allows you to control what goes into your body. If you have long work days think about prepping your meals for the week on the weekend to help with time management.

WEEK 4:

Challenge 1: Avoid fast food this week. Fast food is loaded in fat and sodium. Portion size is at least double of what a standard portion is.

Challenge 2: The only beverages consumed this week are water, milk, 100% fruit juice, or naturally sweetened coffee and tea. Beverages contribute a lot of sugar and empty calories to the diet without much full factor.

Challenge 3: Measure your food this week. Most people have no idea of what portion size they are eating. Measuring your food is especially helpful if you are trying to lose weight. Even if you are eating the right foods if you are eating too much it can have negative health consequences.