

Healthy Tidbits from the Nurse's Office

February is a very busy month with lots of activities scheduled. Wolf Den Café, an activity planned for parents and students to participate in together, with good nutrition being the focus for the evening, will be held February 2nd. Mobile Dentists will be coming to the school on February 15th to provide dental care to students. If you would like to have your student participate in this program please call me at school. February 16th is open house for the whole district along with Kindergarten registration. At the end of the month we will have Freshman Orientation. I hope to see many at some of these events.

A couple months ago I started discussing healthy eating habits. I talked about eating “real food” which means eating whole foods that come straight from plants or animals. Now I am going to talk about eating “mostly plants.” The focus of eating “mostly plants” is the importance of having a diet with a strong foundation of whole plant foods. Plants are truly special because they produce hundreds of natural chemicals, such as vitamins and minerals that help every organ in our body working right —from our heart to our brain.

The U.S.D.A.'s My Plate recommends that about three-quarters of our plates be plant foods: half fruits and vegetables and about one-quarter grains, of which at least half should be whole grains such as brown rice and whole grain pastas and breads.

Although animal products, such as meat, eggs, and dairy products, are rich in proteins, vitamins, and minerals, they are often also high in saturated fat and cholesterol. These can clog our blood vessels and increase our risk of heart attacks as we get older. Plant foods are low in saturated fat and rich in dietary fiber vitamins, minerals, and other potentially beneficial phytonutrients.

The following information tells about different structural part of plants that we eat: roots, stems, leaves, flowers, fruit, and seeds.

Examples of roots we eat: beet, carrot, cassava, horseradish, lotus root, parsnip, rutabaga, sweet potato, turnip



Nutritional benefits of eating roots: Orange roots, such as carrots and sweet potatoes, are good sources of vitamin A. Vitamin A can help us see well in the dark. Other root vegetables are good sources of fiber and complex carbohydrates, and various phytonutrients that can help every part of our body. For people who live in climates that are cold in the winter, roots are great vegetables to eat all winter long since they can be stored for a long time, are hardy and filling, and are loaded with nutrients we need.

Examples of stems we eat: asparagus, garlic, ginger, white potato. Did you know that garlic and white potatoes are really underground stems of the plant? Garlic is a bulb. Potatoes are tubers that are underground swellings in the stem that store energy and other nutrients for the potato plant. Celery is a stalk, or leaf stem. The true stem of the celery plant is the base where all the stalks come out.

Nutritional benefits of eating stems: Asparagus are one of the first plants that come up in the spring. They are rich in potassium and phytonutrients. Other stems are also rich in these same nutrients.



Examples of leaves we eat: basil, beet greens, cabbage, cilantro, collards, kale, lettuce, mustard, parsley, spinach



Nutritional benefits of eating leaves: Leaves are good sources of calcium, iron, many vitamins, and various phytonutrients. The darker green the leaves, the more packed with nutrients. Since leaves are low in calories and high in nutrients, they are one of the most nutrient dense foods we can eat. Leaves are available in the late spring, summer and fall, and might also be available in the winter in warmer climates.

Examples of flowers we eat: borage, broccoli, calendula, cauliflower, chive blossoms, garlic blossoms, nasturtium, squash blossoms, violets

Nutritional benefits of eating flowers: Flowers come in various colors and shapes, and different flowers have different nutrients. Eating flowers can give us the phytonutrients that can help us stay healthy now and prevent diseases in the future.



Examples of fruit we eat: vegetables that are the fruit of the plant: cucumbers, peppers, squash, string beans, tomatoes, zucchini; **fruit examples:** apples, blueberries, cantaloupe, grapes, oranges, peaches, pears, plums, raspberries, strawberries, watermelon

Nutritional benefits of eating fruit: Fruits come in so many different colors! Just about all fruits have fiber and complex carbohydrates. Various different colors are rich in different vitamins and phytonutrients. When having fruit, choose a wide variety of colors.

Examples of seeds we eat: seeds that are grains: barley, oats, quinoa, rye, wheat; **seeds that are good sources of protein:** black beans, cashews, chick peas, kidney beans, peanuts, pinto beans, sunflower seeds

Nutritional benefits of eating seeds: Grains are a good source of complex carbohydrates, fiber, and B vitamins. The seeds that are the good sources of protein also have fiber and various phytonutrients. Beans are great as part of a meal, and nuts and seeds can be sprinkled over vegetables and/or grains as the protein part of a meal.



February is Heart month. Eating healthy foods and exercising regularly are 2 ways to take care of your heart. Everyone should exercise at least 30 to 60 minutes daily. Our weather has been very mild for this time of the year. Taking a family walk gets everyone together for an activity, helps you deal with the stress of the day, and if it is sunny you get a supply of Vitamin D from the sun.



Have a good month
Nurse Deanna

