

## Cooperative Extension

### "September is Go4 Life Month" Be Active Every Day!

Kathleen T. Morgan, Dr. M.H., DTR, FCHS Department Chair



### Go4Life

, an exercise and physical activity campaign from the National Institute on Aging at NIH, is designed to help older adults fit exercise and physical activity into their daily life. Motivating older adults to become physically active for the first time, return to exercise after a break in their routines, or build more exercise and physical activity into weekly routines are the essential elements of Go4Life. Go4Life offers exercises, motivational tips, and free resources to help older adults get ready, start exercising, and keep going. September is national Go4Life month, the weather will be a little cooler, why not start to be more physically active?

#### How Exercise Can Help You

Exercise and physical activity are good for just about everyone, including older adults. No matter your health and physical abilities, you can gain a lot by staying active. In fact, in most cases you have more to lose by not being active.

#### Here are just a few of the benefits of exercise and physical activity:

- Can help maintain and improve your physical strength and fitness.
- Can help improve your ability to do the everyday things you want to do.
- Can help improve your balance.
- Can help manage and improve diseases like diabetes, heart disease, and osteoporosis.
- Can help reduce feelings of depression and may improve mood and overall well-being.
- May improve your ability to shift quickly between tasks, plan an activity, and ignore irrelevant information.

The key word in all these benefits is YOU — how fit and active you are now and how much effort you put into being active. To gain the most benefits, enjoy all 4 types of exercise, stay safe while you exercise, and be sure to eat a healthy diet, too!

#### Four Types of Exercise

Exercise and physical activity fall into four basic categories—endurance, strength, balance, and flexibility. Most people tend to focus on one activity or type of exercise and think they're doing enough. Each type is different, though. Doing them all will give you more benefits. Mixing it up also helps to reduce boredom and cut your risk of injury.

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# Risks and Benefits of Conventional and Organically Grown Produce

Jennifer Todd\*, Graduate Student

Donald W. Schaffner, Distinguished Professor and Extension Specialist



There is debate regarding the risks and benefits of produce grown by organic versus conventional methods. Conventional farming relies on the use of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, which are not allowed in organic farming. Organic farming uses compost, manure, crop rotation, and cover crops to help nurture the soil as well as natural pesticides to fight pests. Some of the areas of scientific debate relate to nutritional quality and the presence of harmful chemicals and/or microbes in foods produced by each method.

There is no clear scientific consensus regarding the nutritional quality of produce grown under each method. Some research shows that some types of organic produce may contain a higher amount of a specific mineral or vitamin as compared to their conventional counterpart but the differences are not consistent. Some produce may have higher concentrations of nitrate, and while there is no clear link to nitrates and disease, nitrates can be converted to nitrites under some conditions, which can pose a health concern.

One recent research study found that people who ate organic food typically ate more vegetables overall than those that did not seek out organic foods, which led to a higher overall nutrient intake. That same study found that consumers of organic lettuce had a greater intake of nitrate as compared to those that did not eat organic lettuce.

Those purchasing organic produce often cite concerns over pesticide residues as a reason for their choice. Pesticides are detected in conventional produce more frequently than organic,

but in both cases the levels are generally below the acceptable limit. Some botanical chemicals are approved for pesticide use in organic farming, but research on their safety is often limited. Crops grown by organic methods are often more susceptible to disease and pests, so plants may increase their production of natural defenses. Some of these natural chemicals can be toxic to humans.

Some think that organic produce poses a higher risk for the presence of microbes that are human pathogens because of the use of manure and compost. However, there is no evidence that organic produce is more contaminated or poses a higher risk for foodborne illness than conventional produce.

It is important to remember that in addition to considering nutritional, chemical and microbiological risks, the two farming methods may also differ in environmental impact and sustainability. Organic farming may be more sustainable, but some crops may have lower yields which means more land is required to produce the same amount of food.

The research to date on the topic shows that neither farming technique seems to provide a significantly safer or more nutritional product. Sustainability and other environmental impacts also need to be considered. More research is always needed; especially as practices change and scientific methods improve.

\*Jennifer Todd is a student in Dr. Schaffner's lab doing research on Salmonella risk in tomatoes.



## VISIONS

is a peer reviewed newsletter published three times yearly and sent upon request, without charge.

Published by

Rutgers Cooperative Extension

Department of Family & Community Health Sciences

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Desktop publishing by: Arly Ditto Graphics

Printed September, 2015

The VISIONS logo, featuring the word "VISIONS" in a stylized, colorful font with a small graphic of a person running.

# Fruit and Vegetable Food Safety in the Home

Daniele Maffei, PhD student and visiting scholar\*

Donald Schaffner, PhD, Extension Specialist in Food Science, Rutgers University



Fruits and vegetables are an important part of a healthy diet. Consumption of fresh produce has increased significantly in recent decades, which is good. Unfortunately in some cases, the increase in foodborne disease has also increased and is higher than the increase in consumption.

Fresh produce may become contaminated with harmful microorganisms during harvest or post-harvest handling. Possible sources of contamination include improperly composted manure, contaminated irrigation water, animal intrusion into the field, or infected food handlers.

In some cases the microbial risks are outside the direct control of the consumer. However many actions can still be taken in the home to reduce risk for foodborne disease.

## Safe handling tips for fresh whole produce

- Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before handling fresh fruits and vegetables
- Make sure the preparation area and utensils (cutting board, dishes and knives) are clean
- Wash all fresh produce thoroughly under clean running water before eating
- Items to be peeled with a vegetable peeler, should be washed first
- Wash different types of vegetables separately (e.g. lettuce and carrots) to avoid cross-contamination
- Scrub firm produce (melons, potatoes, etc.) with a clean vegetable brush, and remove any visible dirt
- Cut away damaged, bruised or moldy areas (bruises can harbor bacteria and molds can be toxic)
- Dry produce with a paper towel or salad spinner to remove excess of water
- Store washed and cut vegetables in a clean container in a refrigerator at 40 °F or below for best quality and safety
- Discard any items that develop mold or slime.
- For more details on storage times, see Home Storage of Foods: Refrigerator and Freezer Storage, Bulletin: E340. Available at: <http://somerset.njaes.rutgers.edu/pdfs/fs340.pdf>



## Safety handling tips for ready-to-eat

- Ready-to-eat produce items are fresh fruits or vegetables that are purchased already cut, chopped, sliced and prepared in the grocery store. Examples include fruit salad, bagged lettuce or spinach, cut carrots and celery, or cut watermelon or cantaloupe.
- Ready-to-eat produce items **MUST** be refrigerated at the grocery store and at home. Do not purchase cut or prepared items that are not properly refrigerated in the store.
- If the package indicates that these products are pre-washed and ready-to-eat, experts recommend not re-washing them in the home because of the possibility of introducing contamination from the home kitchen.
- Remember that fresh fruits and vegetables are an important part of a healthy diet



### For more information:

Raw Produce: Selecting and Serving it Safely. Available at: <http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm114299>

How to Handle Ready-to-Eat Bagged Produce. Available at: [http://www.foodsafety.gov/blog/bagged\\_produce.html](http://www.foodsafety.gov/blog/bagged_produce.html)

\*Daniele Maffei is a PhD student at the University of São Paulo, São Paulo Brazil. She is visiting Dr. Schaffner's lab and developing a quantitative microbial risk assessment for Salmonella in ready-to-eat vegetables.

# Increasing Physical Activity for a Healthier Lifestyle

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Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Union County

To increase your physical activity each day, choose activities that you enjoy and can do regularly. Fitting activity into a daily routine can be easy. Try taking a brisk 10 minute walk to and from the parking lot, bus stop, or train station or join an exercise class at your local Y. Try something different on alternate days. Remember, every little bit of activity adds up and doing something is better than doing nothing.

Make sure to do at least 10 minutes of activity at a time, shorter bursts of activity will not have the same health benefits. For example, walking the dog for 10 minutes before and after work or adding a 10 minute walk at lunchtime can add to your weekly goal. Mix it up. Swim, take a yoga class, garden or lift weights. To be ready anytime, keep some comfortable clothes and a pair of walking or running shoes in the car and at the office.

## Here are some ways to increase your physical activity at home:

- ✓ Join a walking group in the neighborhood or at the local shopping mall. Recruit a partner for support and encouragement.
- ✓ Push the baby in a stroller.
- ✓ Get the whole family involved by enjoying an afternoon bike ride with your kids.
- ✓ Walk up and down the soccer or softball field sidelines while watching the kids play.
- ✓ Use the stairs at home, at work and in the community to add extra steps each day.
- ✓ Walk the dog — don't just watch the dog walk.
- ✓ Clean the house or wash the car.
- ✓ Walk, skate, or cycle more, and drive less.
- ✓ Do stretches, exercises, or pedal a stationary bike while watching television.
- ✓ Mow the lawn with a push mower.
- ✓ Plant and care for a vegetable or flower garden.
- ✓ Play with the kids — tumble in the leaves, build a snowman, splash in a puddle, or dance to favorite music.
- ✓ Exercise to a workout video



### Regular physical activity can produce long term health benefits.

It will help you to improve your risk for heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer. People of all ages and abilities can benefit from being physically active. The more physical activity you do, the greater the health benefits. Take these small steps each day to add more activity for a healthier lifestyle.







# Planning: A Key to Health and Wealth?

Barbara O'Neill, Ph.D., CFP®, Extension Specialist in Financial Resource Management



More than 2,000 years ago, the Roman poet Virgil stated “The greatest wealth is health.” In other words, all the money in the world is of little value if someone is unhealthy and unable to enjoy it. Poor health also carries a large opportunity cost. People can’t build wealth if poor health prevents them from earning an income and saving.

Health and personal finances are both closely associated with personal happiness. Research studies indicate that four factors strongly predict happiness and well-being in most cultures: health, economic status, employment, and family relationships. People are happier when they are healthy, employed and/or engaged in meaningful activities, married or in a long-term committed relationship, and financially secure.

During the past decade, numerous studies have investigated relationships between personal health and finances. In discussions about some of these studies, researchers have observed that certain personal qualities are associated with positive health and financial behaviors. These personality traits, such as optimism, conscientiousness, and future mindedness, affect patterns of thinking and behaving and are relatively stable over time and across various life situations.

A person’s propensity to plan ahead is a key personality trait that has been linked with successful financial outcomes. A 2015 study published by the Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal found that a long planning horizon plays an important role in explaining household asset accumulation and financial security.



The 2015 Savings Survey by the Consumer Federation of America, like previous versions of this annual study, found people with a “savings plan with specific goals” save more successfully than those without a plan. Planners are more careful spending money and more likely to make savings progress and have sufficient savings for emergencies and retirement.

Planning begins with setting specific goals with a future date and dollar cost. Experts refer to these as SMART goals: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-related. An example is “Save \$6,000 to buy a car in three years.” Annual, monthly, and daily savings targets can then be set by “doing the math”: \$2,000 per year, \$167 per month and about \$5.50 per day, in the above example. The Rutgers Cooperative Extension Financial Goal-Setting Worksheet is a useful tool for goal-related math calculations: <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/money/pdfs/goalsettingworksheet.pdf>

Several recent studies have classified people according to their financial practices and identified attributes of financially successful people. Each has used a different term to describe a positive constellation of financial behaviors: Financial Well-Being (Consumer Financial Protection Bureau or CFPB), Financial Health (Center for Financial Services Innovation), and Financial Capability (FINRA Investor Education Foundation).



All three entities refer to goal-setting and future planning in descriptions of financially successful people. For example, people with financial well-being “are setting goals that are important to them and working toward those goals,” according to the CFPB, and “planning ahead for predictable life events” is a key component of financial capability according to FINRA.



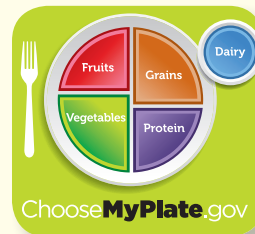
**Want to be healthy and wealthy?** Set specific goals, develop a realistic action plan, and work your plan. Every small step forward makes a big difference.

# Eating Healthy on a Budget -- The Consumer Economics Perspective

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/downloads/ConsumerEconomicsPerspective.pdf>

## Can people eat healthier and spend less money?

- USDA issues four Food Plans (Thrifty, Low-Cost, Moderate-Cost, and Liberal) that show people how to eat a healthy diet at various cost levels. By following USDA's Low-Cost Food Plan, a family can eat a healthier diet, including more vegetables and fruits, at less than what they are spending on food.
- The average American family of four (married couple with two children) spent approximately \$185 per week on food (away and at home) in 2009. This spending does not buy a nutritious diet. The most recent results of USDA's Healthy Eating Index, a report card on the American diet, shows most people have a diet that needs improvement (average Index score is 58 out of 100). Average intake of vegetables is 1.47 cups per day (about 59 percent of the recommendation) and average intake of fruits is .84 cups per day (about 42 percent of the recommendation).
- By following USDA's Low-Cost Food Plan, people could save money and consume a healthier diet. The Low-Cost Food Plan is a nutritious diet that in November 2010 cost \$175 per week for a family of four (married couple age 20-50 and two children age 6-8 and 9-11). Of this total amount, 40 percent goes to vegetables and fruits. Unlike the typical diet, the Plan meets USDA Food Pattern recommendations for vegetables and fruits. For the family of four, the range per person is 2 - 3.5 cups of vegetables per day and 1.5 - 2.5 cups of fruits. Contrary to popular opinion that a healthier diet costs more, it is possible for people to eat healthier, including more vegetables and fruits, and spend less on food.
- USDA's Low-Cost Food Plan not only contains more vegetables and fruits than what people are presently eating, it contains more whole grains and lower fat/skim milk products than what people are eating. It contains much less fats, oils, and sweets than what people are eating.
- USDA maintains a recipe finder database (see <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/USDAFoodPlansCostofFood.htm>) that contains low-cost food choices that follow the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and are relatively easy to prepare. Food choices or recipes are organized by menu item (e.g., main dish, side dish, soup) and intended audience (e.g., older adults, Hispanics, parents of young children).



## Are fruits and vegetables so expensive that people cannot afford to eat a healthy diet?

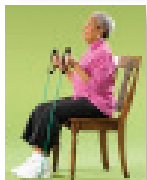
- A recent Produce Marketing Association report "The Cost of the Recommended Daily Servings of Fresh Produce" shows people can meet vegetable and fruit recommendations for about \$0.50 per cup. The average price per cup equivalent across all fresh produce is \$0.42 for vegetables and \$0.56 for fruits (based on 2009-10 data). Nationally, the average retail price for fresh vegetables and fruits recommended for a 2000 calorie diet (4.5 cup equivalents) is \$2.18.
- In the total U.S., the least expensive fresh vegetables were potatoes, lettuce, eggplant, prepared cooking greens, summer squash, carrots, and tomatillos (options costing less than \$0.42 per cup equivalent).
- In the total U.S., the least expensive fresh fruits were watermelon, bananas, apples, pears, pineapple, and peaches (options costing less than \$0.56 per cup equivalent).
- Opting for the least expensive choices available in a single store can significantly drop the average price of fresh vegetables and fruits. According to a USDA study, opting for frozen or canned vegetables and fruits may also lower costs.

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Though we've described each type separately, some activities fit into more than one category. For example, many endurance activities also build strength. Strength exercises also help improve balance.

**Endurance:** Endurance, or aerobic, activities increase your breathing and heart rate. They keep your heart, lungs, and circulatory system healthy and improve your overall fitness. Building your endurance makes it easier to carry out many of your everyday activities. Here are three examples: brisk walking or jogging, yard work (mowing, raking, digging) and dancing.



**Strength:** Strength exercises make your muscles stronger. Even small increases in strength can make a big difference in your ability to stay independent and carry out everyday activities, such as climbing stairs and carrying groceries. These exercises also are called "strength training" or "resistance training." Three examples include: lifting weights, using a resistance band and using your own body weight.



**Balance:** Balance exercises help prevent falls, a common problem in older adults. Many lower-body strength exercises also will improve your balance. Some examples include: standing on one foot, heel-to-toe walk, Tai Chi.

**Flexibility:** Flexibility exercises stretch your muscles and can help your body stay limber. Being flexible gives you more freedom of movement for other exercises as well as for your everyday activities. Three examples include: shoulder and upper arm stretch, calf stretch and yoga.



We want to help you become more active, get the most from your activities, and do them safely. The key is to know your starting point and build slowly from there. Knowing where you are right now will help you pick activities that are realistic for you so that you can be successful. Think about a typical weekday and weekend day. How much time do you spend sitting? How much time are you active? When you're up and moving, what kinds of activities are you doing? You've made a plan to be more active. You may have even started to exercise. But how do you keep going? How do you make exercise and physical activity a permanent part of your daily life?

### Set yourself up to succeed right from the start.

- (1) Make exercise a priority.
- (2) Put physical activity on your "to do" list every day.
- (3) Make it easy and fun. Do things you enjoy, but pick up the pace a bit.
- (4) Make it social by asking a friend or family member to be your exercise buddy.
- (5) Make it happen by choosing to be active in many places and many ways.
- (6) Carry some form of identification with you if you are going outside to be active. And don't worry if your exercise routine is interrupted. You can start again and be successful!



Focus on the health benefits, like feeling stronger and having more energy. Soon, you'll notice that you can do things easier, faster, or for longer than before. If you can stick with an exercise routine or physical activity for at least 6 months, it's a good sign that you're on your way to making it a regular habit. And, of course, rely on Go4Life! Go to <https://go4life.nia.nih.gov/get-started> to find tip sheets that are full of ideas to keep you going. Explore My Go4Life — record your physical activity, track your progress, and find new ways to be physically active. You can also log on to the Walk New Jersey Point to Point Challenge for Internet walking trails here in New Jersey that will log your step and progress. Read the real-life success stories of people just like you and get inspired.

[http://www.getmovinggethealthynj.rutgers.edu/walking\\_program/index.php](http://www.getmovinggethealthynj.rutgers.edu/walking_program/index.php)

## Eating Healthy on a Budget -- The Consumer Economics Perspective

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### How can people actually know what foods are healthful choices and that they are likely economical as well?

- To help consumers implement the 2010 Dietary Guidelines, USDA introduced a 7-day menu as a motivational tool that can help them put a healthy eating pattern into practice.
- Averaged over a week, this menu identifies foods that provide the recommended amounts of key nutrients. Based on national average food costs, adjusted to 2011 prices, the cost of this menu is less than the average amount spent for food, per person, for a 4-person family. For a 2,000 calories menu, the average food cost is \$6.65 per day per person.

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/downloads/ConsumerEconomicsPerspective.pdf>