National Nutrition Month: Eat right with color!

“National Nutrition Month® is a nutrition education and information campaign sponsored annually by the American Dietetic Association. The campaign is designed to focus attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits. NNM also promotes the American Dietetic Association (ADA) and its members to the public and the media as the most valuable and credible source of timely, scientifically based food and nutrition information” (ADA, 2011a).

“This year’s theme is Eat Right with Color, encouraging you to pack more nutrition into your day with colorful foods on your plate. Research is uncovering the benefits of pigment-related phytonutrients—and the fruits and vegetables that supply them. Different foods add a variety of color, texture, shape and flavor to meals and snacks, as well as different nutrients and phytonutrients. Vary the color on your plate to provide a festive and nutritious meal.”

Vary the color in your meals with the following fruits and vegetables:

**Green:** avocados, apples, grapes, honeydew, melons, kiwi, limes, artichokes, asparagus, broccoli, green beans, green peppers and leafy greens such as spinach.

**Orange and yellow:** apricots, cantaloupe, grapefruits, mangos, papayas, peaches, pineapples, carrots, yellow peppers, yellow corn and sweet potatoes.

**Purple and blue:** blackberries, blueberries, plums, raisins, eggplant, purple cabbage and purple-fleshed potatoes.

**Red:** cherries, cranberries, pomegranate, red/pink grapefruit, red grapes, watermelon, beets, red onions, red peppers, rhubarb and tomatoes.

**White, tan and brown:** bananas, brown pears, dates, white peaches, cauliflower, mushrooms, onions, parsnips, turnips, white-fleshed potatoes and white corn” (ADA, 2011b).

Try including some of these fruits and vegetables in your meals a little bit at a time. Eventually making colorful, healthy meals will become natural for you!
20 Ways to Enjoy More Fruits, Vegetables, Whole Grains and Dairy

“To get the most nutrition out of your calories, choose foods packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutrients—and lower in calories. Pick fruits, vegetables, whole grains and fat-free or low-fat dairy more often.

1. Variety abounds when using vegetables as pizza topping. Try broccoli, spinach, green peppers, tomatoes, mushrooms and zucchini.
2. Get saucy with fruit: puree berries, apples, peaches or pears for a thick, sweet sauce on grilled or broiled seafood or poultry, or on pancakes, French toast or waffles.
3. Mix up a breakfast smoothie made with low-fat milk, frozen strawberries and a banana.
4. Heat leftover whole-grain rice with chopped apple, nuts and cinnamon.
5. Make a veggie wrap with roasted vegetables and low-fat cheese rolled in a whole-wheat tortilla.
6. Try crunchy vegetables instead of chips with your favorite dip or low-fat salad dressing.
7. Grill colorful vegetable kabobs packed with tomatoes, green and red peppers, mushrooms and onions.
9. Add color to salads with baby carrots, grape tomatoes, spinach leaves, or mandarin oranges.
10. Prepare instant oatmeal with low-fat or fat-free milk in place of water. Top with dried cranberries and almonds.
11. Stuff an omelet with vegetables. Turn any omelet into a hearty meal with broccoli, squash, carrots, peppers, tomatoes or onions with low-fat sharp cheddar cheese.
12. “Sandwich” in fruits and vegetables. Add pizzazz to sandwiches with sliced pineapple, apple, peppers, cucumbers and tomato as fillings.
13. Wake up to fruit. Make a habit of adding fruit to your morning oatmeal, ready-to-eat cereal, yogurt or toaster waffle.
14. Stock up: fill your fridge with raw vegetables and fruits—“nature’s fast food” - cleaned, fresh and ready to eat.
15. Top a baked potato with beans and salsa or broccoli and low-fat cheese.
16. Microwave a cup of tomato or vegetable soup for a quick afternoon snack.
17. “Grate” complement: add grated, shredded or chopped vegetables such as zucchini, spinach and carrots to lasagna, meat loaf, mashed potatoes, pasta sauce and rice dishes.
18. Stuff a whole grain pita with ricotta cheese and Granny Smith apples slices. Add a dash of cinnamon.
19. Make your main dish a salad of dark, leafy greens and other colorful vegetables. Add chickpeas or edamame (fresh soybeans). Top with a low-fat dressing.
20. Try mixing unsalted popcorn with sliced almonds, dried fruit and a little cinnamon and sugar.” (ADA, 2009).

Write it down

Keeping accurate records is an important part of a weight management plan. It is also a great way to be more aware of what you’re eating and make healthier choices. Food diaries have shown to be a successful tool in helping people reach and maintain their weight goals. Studies suggest that keeping a diary causes people to reduce their food intake, probably by increasing awareness of their eating behaviors. If you have to see it in writing, you may be less likely to sneak in an extra cookie and you may be more likely to add those healthier options such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains. It is a good idea for everyone to be aware of the foods they are consuming and how it affects them (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, 2010).
Power Up with Breakfast

Eating breakfast can raise your metabolism. It can give your metabolism a jumpstart and give you the energy needed to perform at your best throughout the day. A healthy breakfast is important to everyone. “Get the morning nutrition you need with these quick breakfast ideas.

- Make instant oatmeal with milk instead of water. Mix in raisins or dried cranberries. Top with chopped walnuts.
- Layer low-fat yogurt with your favorite crunchy cereal and sliced fruit or berries.
- Mix up a breakfast smoothie made with low-fat milk, frozen strawberries and a banana.
- Top a bowl of whole-grain cereal with blueberries, sliced peaches or any favorite fruit. Pour on low-fat or fat-free milk.
- Top a toaster waffle with low-fat yogurt and fruit.
- Stuff a whole-wheat pita with a sliced, hard cooked egg and low-fat shredded cheese.
- Spread a flour tortilla with peanut butter. Add a whole banana and roll it up.
- Spread almond butter on a whole-grain toasted bagel. Top with apple slices.
- Add lean ham and low-fat Swiss cheese to a toasted whole-grain English muffin.

If your taste buds just don’t crave breakfast foods, try these:

- Peanut butter and banana sandwich on whole grain bread
- Leftover veggie pizza
- Deli turkey, a slice of low-fat cheese and lettuce wrapped in a tortilla.
- Leftover rice mixed with low-fat yogurt, dried fruit and nuts. Sprinkle with cinnamon.

Power up with a healthy breakfast and you’re off to a great start.” (ADA, 2010)

Are you ready to change?

“Before making any big changes in your life, it is important to examine your motivations. You’re more likely to succeed if your change is something you want for yourself and not something that others expect of you. Don’t set yourself up for failure by trying to change your lifestyle if you’re distracted by major problems. Think of ways to resolve your concerns, then as soon as you can, reassess your readiness to make that change in your life.

Once you decide you are ready to make a change in your life, you have to be motivated and stay motivated. For instance, if you decide that you want to achieve a more healthy lifestyle, you need to eat healthy, exercise properly, and remain motivated to continue those practices.

Motivation is very personal. Why do you want to lose weight? What is it that will drive you to stay on course in your healthy eating and exercise so that you can reach your goals? Write down your answers, and from them find things that will give you a strong desire to succeed—things you can use for motivation if the going gets tough. You can apply this to any changes you want to make in your life.

Set goals for the change you want to make that are realistic, specific and measurable. This will help you track your progress and stay motivated to continue.

Realize that setbacks are normal and it’s easy to slip into old, unhealthy habits. While you can expect these setbacks, don’t let them permanently derail your goal. Ask for support from others so that they can keep you on track when you have difficult days. In addition, be forgiving of yourself. Remember that mistakes happen and that each day is a chance to start fresh.

Remember that this is your plan and your change so do it your way. Look at what has worked for you in the past when making large life changes. Are you an all-or-nothing sort of person? If so, implementing a lot of new behaviors at once might work. Or, have you been more successful making changes gradually? In that case, pick one or two specific behaviors to implement each week, such as eating your recommended servings of vegetables or taking a walk every day.

Make a list of obstacles that interfere with your healthy habits. Do you overeat when stressed or bored, or skip your workout because you’re too tired at the end of the day? Come up with a list of possible solutions to these challenges. There are no right or wrong strategies, just what works for you.

Don’t be discouraged if you have a long way to go to reach your goals. Taking the long-term approach instead of a quick-fix will help the change become routine and last a lifetime.” (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, 2010).
In the spotlight this month is **Marilyn Libick**, Account Representative from Financial Services. Marilyn was nominated by a co-worker. This is what her co-worker had to say about her “she’s just like a ‘workout mentor’ for me. She challenges me, makes me feel guilty if I try to back out of working out, etc.

Plus I know she has tried to recruit many of her friends and co-workers to come work out with her over the last semester or two.”

Thank you for your hard work toward health and wellness and for your encouragement to others, Marilyn!

- NMU Employee Wellness

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**Healthy Recipe Challenge**

In honor of National Nutrition Month, Employee Wellness will be holding a Healthy Recipe Challenge. To participate, please email your favorite healthy recipe to wellness@nmu.edu. Entries have to be submitted by Wednesday, March 23 at midnight. Anyone is eligible to participate. Recipes will be judged on the use of colorful foods as well as the nutritional value. The winner will receive a copy of the book, “Cook This Not That,” by David Zinczenko & Matt Goulding.

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**REFERENCES:**