

## March: National Nutrition Month

By: Lisa Franzen-Castle, RD, PhD, Nutrition Specialist

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension

Author E-mail: [lfranz2@unl.edu](mailto:lfranz2@unl.edu)



UNIVERSITY OF  
**Nebraska**  
Lincoln®



The key to achieving optimal health cannot be found in any one food, drink, pill or machine, but rather through commitment to healthy lifestyle behaviors, focused on maintainable and enjoyable eating practices and daily physical activity.



As part of National Nutrition Month® 2015, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics encourages everyone to "Bite into a Healthy Lifestyle" to return

to the basics of healthful eating and active living. This year's theme encourages people to adopt a healthy lifestyle focused on making informed food choices, consuming fewer calories, and getting daily exercise.

### Tips to bite into a healthy lifestyle:

**Learn your needs.** Age, gender, body type, family



history, existing health conditions and daily routines all play a factor in determining which foods to eat more of and which ones

to avoid. Knowing which foods contain the nutrients you need is the next step in biting into a healthy lifestyle.

**Know the facts.** When food selections go beyond whole foods and into packaged foods, the ingredient list and Nutrition Facts Panel can be useful tools to help make more informed choices. The higher an ingredient is on the list, the more of that ingredient is included compared to others. This is a good way to determine if a product is made with whole grains, or has a lot of added sugars.

Regardless of nutrition claims on the front of the package, it's important to read the Nutrition Facts Panel to determine how many calories and how much fat, sugar and salt are in the package.



**Plan your snacks.** Keep a variety of tasty, nutritious, ready-to-eat foods nearby. This will help reduce the temptation to eat less healthy options



from vending machines, convenience stores, or the break room. Healthy snack ideas include fresh fruit, air-popped popcorn, whole-wheat

crackers, dried fruit and nut mixes, almonds and low-fat yogurt. Think of snacks as mini-meals to help you eat more fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy. Remember to snack only when hungry, not out of boredom, stress, or frustration.

**Regular physical activity is a must.** Daily physical



activity is an important part of a healthy lifestyle, but unfortunately most don't include enough movement in daily routines. Regular physical activity strengthens bones and muscles, reduces the risk of chronic illness, and fosters overall well-being, which included stress relief, higher quality sleep and a more positive mental outlook.

**Everyday ways to get moving.** Physical activity is important for everyone at every age. The key is to find activities that are enjoyable and can easily be



maintained. Here are some tips for everyday ways to get moving. Try using the buddy system, joining a walking group or attending fitness classes. Sign up for a 5k run/walk with friends or family. Sneak in exercise at your desk or buy a desk that allows you to stand while working. Take a short walk on your lunch break. Walk up and down the stairs when the weather's bad. Finally, find a way to keep track of daily movement, such as keeping a journal, using a website, or try an activity tracking device.

For more information and resources on National Nutrition Month® from the Academy check out <http://www.nationalnutritionmonth.org/nmm/>.

## Recipe Ideas for Smarter Snacks!

### Going Green with Fruit on St. Patrick's Day:

Looking for a quick snack for kids or adults on St.



Patrick's Day? Go no further than the fresh fruit aisle. Here are several options with green fruit such as honeydew, kiwi and green grapes!

- **Option One:** Fruit Salad – This snack is super easy and quick to prepare. Simply cut-up your favorite fruits and place in fun cups or bowls. If you have young children, make sure to halve or quarter the grapes to reduce the choking hazard. Children can help cut soft fruit like kiwi and honeydew with a table knife.
- **Option Two:** Fruit Parfait – Layer your chopped green fruit with either key lime or vanilla yogurt. You may consider topping with your favorite dry cereal or crunchy chopped nuts such as almonds, walnuts, or peanuts.
- **Option Three:** Fruit Kabobs with Dip – Place small pieces of fruit on skewers. Use plastic straws for young children instead of wooden or metal skewers to avoid sharp ends. Dip could be your favorite flavor of yogurt or even pistachio pudding.
- **Source:** <http://food.unl.edu/fnh/greenfruitkids>

### Additional Resources & Links:

**All the Healthy Bites.** *Healthy Bites* is a newsletter that focuses on a different food, nutrition and/or health theme for each month.

[http://food.unl.edu/fnh/healthybites\\_archives](http://food.unl.edu/fnh/healthybites_archives)

**Cook it Quick.** Our goal is to make you "hungry for healthy food" by offering tips and delicious, quick-to-prepare, inexpensive recipes.

<http://food.unl.edu/fnh/cook-it-quick-recipes>

**Walk Nebraska.** Walk Nebraska is a monthly newsletter designed to help you achieve a healthier lifestyle by making walking an important part of your personal fitness program.

<http://food.unl.edu/fnh/walknewsletters>

**Food Fun for Young Children.** Serving up quick, healthy snack ideas for younger children.

<http://food.unl.edu/fnh/food-fun-for-young-children>

**Nebraska Extension Food, Nutrition, and Health by the Month Calendar.** National Food Days, Weeks, and Months for March.

<http://food.unl.edu/web/fnh/march>

### Sources:

1. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (2015). This National Nutrition Month®, the Academy Encourages Everyone to Bite into a Healthy Lifestyle. Accessed at: <http://www.eatrightpro.org/resource/media/press-releases/national-nutrition-month/this-nnm-academy-encourages-everyone-to-bite-into-a-healthy-lifestyle>.
2. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (2015). 'Bite into a Healthy Lifestyle' with Informed Food Choices during National Nutrition Month® and Beyond. Accessed at: <http://www.eatrightpro.org/resource/media/press-releases/national-nutrition-month/bite-into-a-healthy-lifestyle-with-informed-food-choices>.
3. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (2015). During National Nutrition Month® Make Sensible Snacks Part of Your Healthy Eating Plan. Accessed at: <http://www.eatrightpro.org/resource/media/press-releases/national-nutrition-month/during-nnm-make-sensible-snacks-part-of-your-healthy-eating-planpro-press-release>.
4. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (2015). 'Bite into a Healthy Lifestyle' during National Nutrition Month® by Including Physical Activity in Your Daily Routine. Accessed at: <http://www.eatrightpro.org/resource/media/press-releases/national-nutrition-month/bite-into-a-healthy-lifestyle-during-national-nutrition-month-by-including-physical-activity>.

*Updated: February 2015*