February 21, 2013
RELEASE DATE: February 27, 2013

Deborah Rhoades, M.A, R.D.
Extension Educator, Family & Consumer Sciences

OVERALL EATING PATTERNS ARE MOST IMPORTANT FOR HEALTHFUL EATING

The overall pattern of food that a person eats is more important to a healthy diet than focusing on single foods or individual nutrients, according to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics in its newly updated position paper "Total Diet Approach to Healthy Eating."

According to the position paper, of which I served as a reviewer: "In contrast to the total diet approach, classification of specific foods as 'good' or 'bad' is overly simplistic and may foster unhealthy eating behaviors." The Academy's position paper stresses that moderation; portion size and exercise are the key concepts for balancing food and beverage intakes.

The paper, published in the February Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, states:

> It is the position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics that the total diet or overall pattern of food eaten is the most important focus of healthy eating. All foods can fit within this pattern, if consumed in moderation with appropriate portion size and combined with physical activity. The Academy strives to communicate healthy eating messages that emphasize a balance of food and beverages within energy needs, rather than any one food or meal.

The paper has been updated to reflect the most current nutrition guidance, such as the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the USDA's MyPlate food guidance system; the White House's Let's Move! campaign to reduce childhood obesity and Healthy People 2020. Each of these public policies and dietary patterns supports the total diet approach.

According to the position paper, while studies including the Academy's "Nutrition and You" national consumer survey show Americans are "conscious of the importance of healthy diets and physical activity," most people do not meet the recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines. For example, over two-thirds of individuals surveyed do not eat fruit or vegetables more than twice a day, and a little over one-third are not physically active.

In that environment, according to the Academy: "Labeling specific foods in an overly simplistic manner as 'good foods' and 'bad foods' is not only inconsistent with the total diet approach, but it may cause many people to abandon efforts to make dietary improvements. In 2011, 82 percent of U.S. adults cited not wanting to give up foods they like as a reason for not eating healthier. For
these reasons, the concepts of moderation and proportionality are necessary components of a practical, action-oriented understanding of the total diet approach."

The paper notes that the most recent Dietary Reference Intakes use a total diet approach because it allows for a broad range of foods to meet a person's nutrition needs over time. This allows diet choices based on individual preferences, genetic background, and personal health status and food availability.

The position paper can be accessed on the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics website at http://www.eatright.org/About/Content.aspx?id=8356

Enjoy these nutrition packed recipes complements of the Academy.

**Jade-Green Broccoli**
Serves 8 (about 6 cups)

1 bunch broccoli (about 2 pounds)
1 tablespoon cornstarch
2 tablespoons light soy sauce
1/2 cup canned reduced-sodium chicken broth
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons peanut, canola or corn oil
1 clove garlic, minced
1 teaspoon grated ginger root
2 tablespoons sherry

Peel the broccoli stems only if they are large and tough. Cut the stems diagonally into 1/3-inch slices. Separate the florets.

Mix the cornstarch, soy sauce, chicken broth and salt in a small bowl; set aside.

Prepare a large skillet or wok with non-stick pan spray. Heat the oil in the skillet; add the garlic and ginger, and cook 2 minutes over medium heat. Add the broccoli. Turn the heat to medium-high and stir-fry for 3 minutes.

Add the sherry; cover and cook 2 minutes longer.

Add the soy sauce mixture and stir constantly until the sauce thickens. Serve hot or chilled.

**Sweet Potato Quesadillas**
Serves 4

2 small sweet potatoes
2 medium red, yellow or orange bell peppers, cut into 1/2-inch strips
1 medium yellow onion, cut into 1/2-inch strips
1/2 tablespoon olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste
1 teaspoon minced garlic
Cooking spray
4 (8-inch) whole wheat tortillas
1 cup shredded pepper jack or cheddar cheese

Wash potatoes well. Pierce with a fork five to six times, and microwave on high for 5 to 7 minutes, depending on the size of the potato. Remove flesh from the skins and mash the flesh. Keep warm.

Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add peppers, onion, salt and pepper. Cook 10 to 12 minutes or until tender. Add garlic and sauté 2 more minutes. Remove from heat and keep warm.

Coat a medium non-stick skillet with cooking spray and heat over medium-high heat. Add 1 tortilla to skillet and sprinkle with 1/4 cup cheese. Heat until cheese begins to melt. Spread approximately 1/4 of the mashed potatoes over 1/2 of tortilla. Top with 1/4 of pepper and onion mixture, using a slotted spoon to drain off excess moisture.

Fold over tortilla and cook approximately 1 to 2 minutes on each side or until browned. Remove quesadilla from heat and keep warm. Repeat with additional 3 tortillas.

Serve with tomato salsa and sour cream if desired.

For more information about the University of Maryland Extension Frederick County Office check out our website http://Frederick.umd.edu/ University of Maryland Extension programs are open to all citizens and will not discriminate against anyone because of race, age, sex, color, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, religion, ancestry, or national origin, marital status, genetic information, or political affiliation, or gender identity and expression.

Deborah Rhoades, MA, RD, LDN, is a licensed Registered Dietitian and Extension Educator in Family and Consumer Sciences.

DHR:ls