As the flowers bloom and the days grow longer, children begin to count the days until summer and the end of the school year. Parents begin to think about how to keep their children busy, active, and healthy during the school-free months. There are plenty of ways to keep your children busy and active this summer!

Below you will find some ideas about how to help meet the goal of 60 minutes of physical activity every day. The best part about being active is that it adds up even if they are active 10 minutes at a time.

- **Walk around the neighborhood each morning.** It is a little cooler in the mornings and will make the walk more enjoyable when it’s not so hot.

- **Hula-hoop, hopscotch, jump rope, or a bike ride around the block.** Use the evenings to get your child outside and let them play games with neighbors or family members.

- **Visit a local park or hiking trail.** Pack some picnic foods (such as fresh fruits, veggies, whole grain crackers, and nuts or trail mix) and make a day out of your adventure. Children will love to explore nature while being active.

- **Family dance parties are perfect on rainy days.** Turn on the music and take turns making up moves! Enjoy the laughter and family time.

- **Have the children help in the garden.** Gardening counts as physical activity too! Letting them help in the garden will teach them how plants grow. Children are more likely to try fruits and veggies that they help to grow.

Make sure that everyone drinks plenty of water. It’s important to drink a lot of water even before you feel thirsty.

For more ideas on how to keep your children active, visit the Let’s Move website

Source: [http://eatsmartmd.blogspot.com/2015/06/keeping-kids-active-during-this-summer.html](http://eatsmartmd.blogspot.com/2015/06/keeping-kids-active-during-this-summer.html)
WASH YOUR FRUITS & VEGETABLES!

There is nothing better during the summer than eating local Maryland fruit and vegetables. Eating local produce is a great way to make quick and refreshing summer time meals, as well as make half your plate fruit and vegetables (MyPlate)! Surprisingly there are some do's and don'ts when it comes to produce food safety that we want to highlight this summer.

**Food Safety and Produce Facts:**
- Between 2006-2010 49% of known foodborne outbreaks were caused by Norovirus.¹
- Between 1998-2008, leafy greens (13%), vine-stalk vegetables (10%), and fruit and nuts (11%) were identified foods attributing to foodborne outbreaks in the USA.²

Based on some of these facts it is important to know how to safely handle fresh produce at home. There are six important steps when handling your Maryland produce: check, clean, rinse, separate, chill, and throw away.³

**Check:**
1. Look to see that the produce you are buying is not bruised or damaged. Bruising/damaged produce allow for microbes to enter inside your produce and grow.
2. When choosing pre-cut produce look to see salads or cut melons are refrigerated or on ice (to prevent microbial growth during the warm summer months).

**Clean:**
1. Clean your hands (see our Fall 2014 Newsletter).
2. Clean all surfaces and utensils before and after cutting fresh produce.

**Rinse:**
1. **Rinse produce JUST BEFORE use**, under running potable (drinkable) water.
2. Firm-skinned produce should be rubbed by hand or scrubbed with a clean brush while rinsing under running potable water.
3. Packaged produce labeled “ready-to-eat,” “washed” or “triple washed” **should not be washed.** Rewashing may introduce microbes back on to clean produce.
4. Dry produce with a paper towel.
5. **DO NOT** use soap or bleach to wash fresh produce. These products are not for human consumption, and represent a chemical ingestion hazard.

**Separate:**
1. Even in your grocery cart or reusable bag keep fresh produce separated from raw meat, poultry, seafood, and/or eggs.
2. Keep your fresh produce separated in your refrigerator. Ideally, keep fresh produce above your raw proteins to prevent meat juices dripping on your produce.

3. When preparing produce use separate cutting boards and knives for your produce and proteins. If you only have one cutting board, cut the produce first before moving on to your protein. Always remember to clean your cutting boards and utensils with warm soapy water between uses.

Chill:

1. Keep your refrigerator at or below 40°F. Microbial (bacteria, yeast, and mold) growth occurs more often at temperatures above 40°F.
2. Refrigerate all cut, peeled or cooked produce within 1 hour of preparing, during the hot Maryland summers.

Throw Away:

1. Throw away any produce that has not been refrigerated within two hours of cutting, peeling or cooking.
2. Remove and throw away bruised and damaged produce before cooking or eating raw.
3. Throw away any produce that touched raw meat, poultry, seafood, and/or eggs.
4. When in doubt, throw it out.

References

3. fightbac.org

Source: Shauna C. Henley, PhD, Extension Educator, Family & Consumer Sciences, Baltimore County

8 SUMMER STEPS FOR HEALTHY LIVING

1. Give Your Diet a Berry Boost

If you do one thing this summer to improve your diet, have a cup of mixed fresh berries -- blackberries, blueberries, or strawberries -- every day. They'll help you load up on antioxidants, which may help prevent damage to tissues and reduce the risks of age-related illnesses. Blueberries and blackberries are especially antioxidant-rich. A big bonus: berries are also tops in fiber, which helps keep cholesterol low and may even help prevent some cancers.

2. Get Dirty -- and Stress Less

To improve your stress level, plant a small garden, cultivate a flower box, or if space is really limited, plant a few flower pots -- indoors or out. Just putting your hands in soil is "grounding." And when life feels like you're moving so fast your feet are barely touching the stuff, being mentally grounded can help relieve physical and mental stress.

3. Floss Daily

You know you need to, now it's time to start: floss every single day. Do it at the beach (in a secluded spot), while reading on your patio, or when watching TV -- and the task will breeze by. Flossing reduces oral
bacteria, which improves overall body health, and if oral bacteria is low, your body has more resources to fight bacteria elsewhere. Floss daily and you're doing better than at least 85% of people.

4. Get Outside to Exercise

Pick one outdoor activity -- going on a hike, taking a nature walk, playing games such as tag with your kids, cycling, roller blading, or swimming -- to shed that cooped-up feeling of gym workouts. And remember, the family that plays together not only gets fit together -- it's also a great way to create bonding time.

5. Be Good to Your Eyes

To protect your vision at work and at play, wear protective eyewear. When outdoors, wear sunglasses that block at least 99% of ultraviolet A and B rays. Sunglasses can help prevent cataracts, as well as wrinkles around the eyes. And when playing sports or doing tasks such as mowing the lawn, wear protective eyewear. Ask your eye doctor about the best type; some are sport-specific.

6. Vacation Time!

Improve your heart health: take advantage of summer’s slower schedule by using your vacation time to unwind. Vacations have multiple benefits: they can help lower your blood pressure, heart rate, and stress hormones such as cortisol, which contributes to a widening waist and an increased risk of heart disease.

7. Alcohol: Go Lite

Summer’s a great time to skip drinks with hard alcohol and choose a light, chilled alcoholic beverage (unless you are pregnant or should not drink for health or other reasons). A sangria (table wine diluted with juice), a cold beer, or a wine spritzer are all refreshing but light. In moderation -- defined as one to two drinks daily -- alcohol can protect against heart disease.

8. Sleep Well

Resist the urge to stay up later during long summer days. Instead pay attention to good sleep hygiene by keeping the same bedtime and wake-up schedule and not drinking alcohol within three hours of bedtime. It’s also a good idea to avoid naps during the day unless you take them every day at the same time, for the same amount of time.

Adapted from: http://www.webmd.com/women/features/8-summer-steps-for-healthy-living
FIVE SUMMER HOME PROBLEMS AND HOW TO TAKE CARE OF THEM

1. Your House is Too Hot

This is probably the most common complaint of all. There are a few things you can do so that your AC doesn’t have to do all the work. Use blinds, curtains or shades strategically so that you avoid direct sun in the middle of the day. Ceiling fans are an extremely energy efficient way to cool off the house. This is a great supplement to air conditioning, and on many days it can even replace it.

2. Insects are Everywhere

There is no doubt that bugs come out in full force in the summer. Ants, moths, bees, mosquitos and other crawly things are hard to keep out. You should be careful about leaving food around in the summer. Make sure you keep everything sealed and put away. It’s best to refrigerate items that are especially attractive to insects, such as sweets.

3. Plumbing Problems

Many homes are more likely to experience plumbing problems over the summer. One reason for this is that severe thunderstorms and flash floods are common in the summer in certain areas.

Children are home from school and may flush inappropriate items down the toilet. Finally, summer cookouts can mean clogged disposals if you are throwing away things like corn cobs and watermelons.

The best way to approach these problems is prevention. Be gentle with toilets and garbage disposal systems and make sure kids know what is and isn’t acceptable to flush. If you do have any such issues, it’s best to call a plumber.

4. Mold, Mildew and Excessive Humidity

If you live in a climate that has humid summers, you may experience high levels of humidity in your home. This can also lead to problems such as mold and mildew, especially in basements and other moist areas.

To lower humidity, keep air circulating as much as possible. A de-humidifier can also be helpful and can keep your home more comfortable. When it’s very humid outside, keep doors and window shut.

Mold and mildew can be serious problems. If you have them, use a fungicidal or chlorine-based cleaner. In severe cases, you may need professional help to have mold or mildew removed.

5. Weeds in Your Yard

Weeds can be stubborn foes that attack your yard and garden. They can spoil the pristine look of your lawn and frustrate your attempts to grow flowers and vegetables. To control weeds, you have to stay alert and make sure they don’t gain the upper hand. Weeding regularly is essential. Aside from weed killers, certain household items can help control weeds. One of the best natural weed killers is vinegar.
If you find that you don’t have the time or energy for weed control, hire a landscaping company to handle it. One way or another, you should address the weed problem to keep your yard looking its best.

Adapted from http://www.theoriginalsource.com/my-house-is-too-hot-summer-home-problems.html

FAVORITE FRUITS AND VEGGIES TO BUY AT THE FARMERS' MARKET

Farmers' markets are a great way to buy fresh fruits and vegetables. The fruits and vegetables at a farmers’ market are picked right from the plant and taken to the market. The produce at the farmers’ market is always in season. You can be sure they will be fresh and delicious! Since there are many fruits and vegetables to buy at the market, it can be hard to know which ones will be the best buy for you and your family. Here are five favorite foods to buy at the farmers' market.

**Tomatoes**
There are many shapes and sizes of tomatoes. All of them can be used in a lot of meals. Tomatoes from local farms taste better because they are fresh. Tomatoes also have antioxidants to keep you healthy. Pair them with zucchini and have a healthy side dish. Check out the Zucchini and Tomatoes recipe from a previous blog post!

**Berries**
Strawberries and blueberries are a great summer treat! They are better to buy at the farmers’ market because they are in season and can be grown in Maryland. Berries have many vitamins and minerals that are good for you, too! Make them part of your breakfast with a Red Berry Parfait!

**Carrots**
At the grocery store you will most likely find orange carrots. At the farmers’ market, they come in many different colors and sizes. Carrots also make the perfect on-the-go snack! Add carrots to your "Garden on a Plate", which is a great recipe that kids can help to make.

**Onions**
Onions can be used in hot meals or raw on a salad. Onions are great to use to add flavor to your meals. There are a variety of onions with different flavors, shapes, and colors. Try grilling them to bring out the flavors!

**Zucchini**
Zucchini is in-season and tastes best in the summer. It can be used in hot dishes or eaten raw. Zucchini can be put into salads, soups, and stir-fries. This is an easy way to add veggies to your meal. Ask a farmer if you do not know which fruits or vegetables will be best for you. Farmers know a lot about the fruits and vegetables they grow and sell, so think of them as the produce experts. Farmers’ markets
are a great way to try new fruits and vegetables too. Next time you are at your local farmers’ market, pick something up you have not had before! To find the local farmers’ market near you, visit the Maryland Farmers’ Market page at http://www.visitmarylad.org/article/maryland-farmers-markets.

Source: http://eatsmartmd.blogspot.com/2015/06/favorite-fruits-and-veggies-to-buy-at.html

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**ZUCCHINI IN MARYLAND: A GREAT SUMMER VEGGIE!**

Summer in Maryland is zucchini season. From July through September, zucchini starts showing up at the farmers’ market and (if you are lucky) in your neighbor’s garden! Zucchini is close in shape and color to a cucumber. It can be eaten raw, stir-fried, roasted, and grilled. The mild flavor also makes zucchini a delicious seasonal treat.

**What is Zucchini?**
Zucchini is a summer squash. It belongs to the same family as other summer squashes such as yellow squash, crooked neck squash, and straightneck squash. These squashes are different from winter squash because summer squash only grow once the dirt is warm and they don't last long in storage.

Zucchini is actually best when it is still immature. If you wait too late or let it grow too big, the rind is not tender and edible. Small zucchini are the most delicious choice.

Try to use your zucchini up shortly after you pick or get it. Zucchini will only keep fresh for 5 to 14 days in cool (32-50 degrees F) temperatures. Zucchini is a good source of vitamin C, manganese, potassium, and vitamin B6. It is also very low in calories.

How to prepare and use: Wash, trim ends, and cut into pieces. Eat raw, bake, sauté, broil or grill. Try this Zucchini and Tomato recipe for a taste of some of summer’s favorite vegetables.

**Zucchini and Tomatoes**
Serves 4

**Ingredients:**
2 Tablespoons vegetable oil
1/4 cup onion, chopped
2 tomatoes, washed and diced, or one 16-ounce can of diced tomatoes, drained
1 garlic clove, chopped
2 medium zucchini, washed and deiced
1 teaspoon sugar
Salt and pepper to taste

**Directions:**
1. Heat oil in a sauce pan over medium heat.
2. Add onion and garlic. Cook until tender, about 5 to 7 minutes.
3. Add zucchini, tomatoes, sugar, and pepper.
4. Cover pan and reduce heat.
5. Cook until vegetables are tender, about 20 minutes.

Source: http://eatsmartmd.blogspot.com/2015/06/zucchini-in-maryland-great-summer-veggie.html
If you have a disability that requires special assistance for your participation in a program, please contact the Carroll County Extension Office at 410-386-2760; fax 410-876-0132, two (2) weeks prior to the program.

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Please visit us online at http://extension.umd.edu/carroll-county
Get Growing!

Visit the market to buy seedlings to grow fresh vegetables and herbs at home.

- Purchase vegetable seeds and plants with your EBT card.
- Farmers’ markets and garden centers sell vegetable seedlings.
- Grow vegetables and herbs in small containers.

**Buy fresh, local produce at the farmers’ market and at the grocery store.**

- Buy locally-grown strawberries, they taste best June through early July.
- Look for locally-grown peaches, blueberries, squash, tomatoes, and peppers at the grocery store and at the farmers’ market during the summer months.
- Local produce often costs less and tastes better.

**Remember to include a variety of fruits and vegetables in meals and snacks.**

www.eatsmart.umd.edu
www.choosemyplate.gov

Grow Your Own Veggies in Container Gardens

Container gardening is a great way to connect with your family and grow healthy, low-cost food for your table. Many different vegetables, such as radishes, lettuce, spinach, kale, collards, mustard greens, and most herbs can be planted in containers.

**Get Started:**

- Use a planting container that is at least 3-6 inches deep.
- Add potting soil to your container, to about ½ inch from the top.
- Following the instructions on the seed packet, evenly spread seeds in the container and cover lightly with soil.
- Water lightly to moisten the soil.
- Water as needed, to keep the soil from drying out.
- Harvest lettuce and greens by cutting off the leaves at the base of the stem.
- Harvest radishes within 3-4 weeks by pulling the whole plant out, when the radish is just under an inch in diameter.
- Radish leaves can be added to salads for an extra kick, in addition to the root.

Spaghetti Squash, Tomatoes and Spinach

Makes: 4 servings
Serving size: 1 cup

**Ingredients:**

1 spaghetti squash, washed, and cut in half, seeds removed
1 Tablespoon vegetable oil
2 cups fresh spinach, washed and chopped
1 teaspoon fresh oregano, washed and chopped, or ½ teaspoon dried
3 Tablespoons Parmesan cheese
1 cup cherry tomatoes, washed and cut in half
Salt and pepper to taste

**Directions:**

1. Place the 2 squash halves, cut side down, in microwave-safe baking dish.
2. Add ¼ cup water to baking dish and cover with plastic wrap.
3. Microwave on high 12 minutes or until squash is soft when pressed.
4. Let stand covered 3 minutes.
5. In large bowl, whisk oil, oregano and 2 Tablespoons Parmesan cheese.
6. Stir in tomatoes and spinach, and season lightly with salt and pepper to taste.
7. In a large bowl, scrape cooked squash out with a fork. Add strands to tomato mixture and toss until combined.
8. Sprinkle with remaining Parmesan cheese.

Serve as a side dish with grilled chicken or fish.
Spinach, Strawberry, and Cantaloupe Salad

Makes: 12 servings  
Serving Size: ½ cup

Ingredients:
- 4 cups fresh spinach leaves, washed, tough stems removed
- 1 cup strawberries, washed and cut in half
- 1 cup cantaloupe, cubed
- 3 Tablespoons low-fat poppy seed or raspberry salad dressing

Directions:
1. Tear spinach leaves into bite-size pieces and place in a large bowl.
2. Add fruit to spinach.
3. Add salad dressing to greens. Toss to mix well.
4. Serve salad immediately.
5. Refrigerate leftovers.

Make Your Own Garden Containers and Tools

Have you ever thought of re-using plastic milk jugs, 2-liter bottles or other large plastic food containers as garden containers to grow food?

To Make Garden Containers:
- For a bottle or milk jug, use a knife or box cutter to remove the top half of the container for planting.
- Use a hammer and nail to gently pierce holes in the container for drainage.

To Make Your Own Watering Can:
- Use a milk jug with a screw-on lid or any other bottle with a wide lid.
- With a thumb tack or nail, poke several holes in the lid and one additional hole in the handle for air to escape.

Peach Salsa

Makes: 8 servings  
Serving Size: ½ cup

Ingredients:
- 2 peaches, washed, peeled and chopped
- ½ red bell pepper, washed and chopped
- ½ cucumber, washed, seeded and chopped
- 3 green onions, washed and sliced
- 2 jalapeno peppers, washed, seeded, and finely chopped
- 2 Tablespoons honey
- 2 Tablespoons lime juice

Directions:
1. In a large bowl combine all ingredients.
2. Cover salsa with plastic wrap.
3. Chill salsa in the refrigerator until cold.

Serve peach salsa on top of green salad, or top grilled fish or chicken to add fresh flavor without adding fat or salt.

For more information about container gardening, visit:
http://eatsmart.umd.edu/locallygrown/gardening

Photo courtesy of OneCreativeMommy.com