

National Health Observances for the month of September

September is Fruits and Veggies-More Matters Month and Prostate Cancer Awareness Month. As we learned last month and will learn this month, vitamins and minerals are essential for a healthy life. A reliable source for these nutrients are fruits and vegetables, as we all know from motherly and doctoral advice, we should eat these on a daily basis. How many do you need a day? I can not answer that because everyone is different, but you can go to this website, www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov, to help figure out how many fruits and vegetables you need a day, along with healthy tips, recipes, and how to measure a cup of a fruit or vegetable.

Did you know that one in six men will get prostate cancer? Yet, if caught early, nearly 100% will survive. Prostate cancer has no symptoms in the early stage, that's why screening is critical to early detection. Annual screenings should start at age 45 for the general population and are performed by doing a blood test to test the PSA level and by also doing a direct exam of the prostate looking for lumps or abnormalities that might be a tumor growth. Check out www.fightprostatecancer.org, for more information about prevention and detection of prostate cancer.

Minerals

Last time we looked at vitamins and the role that they play in our health, this month we will take a look at minerals. Minerals are inorganic substances that the body can not manufacture but are needed to regulate many vital body processes. Your body only needs small amounts of minerals and each mineral has its own unique function in health. We will identify some of the more important ones that play an important role in the health of young and old alike.

Iron, especially during the teen years, is important to the body as it is vital for the hemoglobin in your blood, which carries oxygen throughout the body. Without plenty of iron a person may feel tired and have little endurance. Sources of iron include meat, poultry, peanuts, dried fruits, egg yolks, liver (ugh!) and fortified (added to) breakfast cereal. Calcium is another important mineral needed by the body, giving structure to bones and helping develop and maintain bone strength. It also aids muscle contraction, blood clotting, and proper function of the nervous system. Calcium is stored in bones and gives them their density and strength, when a person fails to get enough calcium through foods, the body will draw upon the deposits of calcium stored in the bones to perform the before mentioned functions. If this takes place, it can result in weakening of the bones and can increase the chance of breaking your bones. A lack of calcium during childhood and the teen years can lead to poor bone density and later in life to osteoporosis, a condition where bones become brittle and weak. This is an area of concern for women, who are more likely to suffer from osteoporosis. Calcium can be had from dairy products and leafy vegetables. Phosphorus combines with calcium to make bones and teeth strong and together they are the most abundant minerals in the body. Phosphorus can be found in milk, peas, beans, liver, meat, fish, poultry, eggs, broccoli, and whole grains. Sodium, chloride, and potassium are minerals that belong to a group known as electrolytes. They help maintain the balance of fluid within your body cells, which is essential for body functions to work properly. Having the correct fluid balance is the main way to prevent or control muscle cramps. Sodium is found in table salt, soy sauce, and processed foods, which is the food we buy in the grocery stores. Salt is a preservative which helps aid the storage life of food, which some of you of the older generation already knew I am sure, especially if you ever helped salt some hams or can some beans. Chloride is also found in table salt, milk, meat, fish, poultry, and egg whites. Potassium, which if you are suffering from muscle cramps you definitely would want to increase, is found in bananas, oranges/orange juice, potatoes, milk, and meat. These are just a few of the more important minerals needed by the body to function, so remember these minerals when it comes to planning for yourself and/or your family's diet and meals.

From the Nurse's Desk

Nurse Amanda: Healthy habits to keep you well this school year! It is time to start back to school, so everyone needs to get back on schedule. Sufficient sleep hygiene is an essential aspect of health promotion and brain power. The NSF recommends 9-11 hours of sleep for 5-12 year olds and 8-9 hours for adolescents. Also, healthy diets and a good breakfast promote better learning and more energy throughout the day. Healthy habits can protect everyone from spreading germs at home or school. Simple actions like covering your mouth and cleaning your hands often can prevent illness and reduce sick days. Yearly Well-Child exams are highly recommended and need to continue through

adulthood. Many children do not get these much needed exams after Kindergarten and miss vital vaccinations through the years. Final note, remember to fill out your child's emergency cards and return them to your school nurse and inform them if your child is on any medications. This is very important for your child's health and safety for prevention and early detection is the key to a healthy environment.

Next Month

We will conclude our look at the six nutrients needed by the body to sustain life, with water. We will also talk about some exercise next time to go along with our knowledge of the nutrients found in food. Until then, keep up the efforts for a healthier you.