



Planning a Stress-less Vacation

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Planning a Stress-less Vacation

Are you thinking about taking a summer vacation with the family this year? Summer vacations can be a very special time and leave you with a lifetime of memories, but they can also be a source of stress. Let's take a look at some simple tips that can help you ensure a relaxing and stress free vacation experience.

Try not to do too much. Trying to do too much can be extremely stressful. Consider staying in fewer places for a longer period of time. This will allow you to spend more of your vacation time relaxing, rather than traveling. Experts also advise against trying to pack too many activities into your time away. It's okay to schedule activities, but every minute doesn't need to be action-packed. Make it a point to plan some relaxing down time for yourself.

Reduce conflicts and complaints by including the entire family in vacation planning. Have all members suggest activities that they would like to do, but help your children understand that there will be trade-offs. Some things on the vacation list will certainly be included to keep them happy, but others will be there to help keep mom and dad happy, too.

Be prepared when you hit the road. Make sure you prepare directions to your destination in advance. Have maps and alternate travel routes handy in case you hit traffic. Consider investing in a GPS to help you find unknown locations easily. You may also benefit from checking the weather and traffic reports often to avoid dangerous and frustrating delays. Consider traveling during non-peak times. This way you can avoid those jam-packed highways and the frustration that goes along with being stuck in the middle of the chaos.

Also, remember that car trips can be awfully boring for those sitting in the back seat. How many times can you hear, "Are we there yet?" Entertainment distractions, like books, games, puzzles, handheld electronic games, MP3 players, and a portable DVD player can reduce boredom and the stress that goes along with complaining passengers.

Make sure you don't suffer from sleep deprivation prior to and during your vacation. Burning the candle at both ends to prepare for your vacation can leave you exhausted before you've even begun your trip. Consider taking off work a day or two in advance of your trip, so you aren't rushed to get ready to leave. Other tips to ward off sleep deprivation and the irritability that accompanies it include taking naps, using caffeine wisely, and managing jet lag by scheduling vacation activities accordingly.

Be realistic about eliminating all work obligations. If you can't completely eliminate work concerns, plan some specific work time. Schedule an afternoon for the family to take off on an adventure and allow yourself to check in with the office. Make sure you plan this time, get needed work done, and then refocus on your vacation.

Remember, vacation time should be fun, restful, relaxing and leave you feeling rejuvenated and renewed. Make this your goal in advance and then make choices that will assist you in accomplishing your goal. We work hard all year and vacation time should be cherished.

References:
American Counseling Association:
<http://www.counseling.org>

WebMD:
<http://www.webmd.com>

Tips for Safe Summer Eating

It's summertime! Picnics, barbeques, and cookouts! Whoa! Before you pack up the goodies, take a moment to do a food safety check for summer. There are 4 basic food safety measures to follow:

- **Clean: Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water before packing them in the cooler - including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten.** Rub firm-skinned fruits and vegetables under running tap water or scrub with a clean vegetable brush while rinsing with running tap water. Dry fruits and vegetables with a clean cloth towel or paper towel. Clean utensils and countertops after each contact with raw foods.... and WASH your hands before and after handling food. Outdoor Hand Cleaning: If you don't have access to running water, simply use a water jug, some soap, and paper towels. Or, consider using moist disposable towelettes for cleaning your hands
- **Don't cross contaminate: separate.** Use separate coolers for perishables; don't let raw foods and their juices to come in contact with foods that won't be cooked. Keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood securely wrapped. This keeps their juices from contaminating prepared/cooked foods or foods that will be eaten raw, such as fruits and vegetables. Don't use plates or utensils that have come in contact with raw meats, poultry or seafood. Have a clean platter and utensils ready to serve cooked food.
- **CHILL!** Take a cooler with ice when you are buying perishables; keep cold food below 40 degrees to prevent growth of bacteria. Drain off water as ice melts and replace ice frequently. Keep food cold in your coolers; keep coolers closed to help the contents stay cold longer. Keep coolers out of the sun and keep covered if possible for better insulation. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours. Avoid the "danger zone." Temperatures that fall between 40 degrees and 140 degrees will increase chances of bacterial growth that leads to food borne illness.



Safe Food Temperature Chart

Food	Temperature
Steaks and roasts	145°F
Fish	145°F
Pork	160°F
Ground beef	160°F
Egg dishes	160°F
Chicken breasts	165°F
Whole poultry	165°F
Shrimp, lobster, and crabs	Cook until pearly and opaque
Clams, oysters, and mussels	Cook until the shells are open

- **Cook safely: Marinate safely. Marinate foods in the refrigerator--never on the kitchen counter or outdoors.** In addition, if you plan to use some of the marinade as a sauce on the cooked food, reserve a portion separately before adding the raw meat, poultry, or seafood. Don't reuse marinade. Cook foods thoroughly. Bring foods to a high enough internal temperature to kill bacteria (see chart); keep "ready" food hot. If you partially cook or pre-cook food (i.e. boil or microwave before grilling), finish the cooking process immediately, as you increase the risk of bacterial growth by waiting too long.

You can't see, smell or feel the bacteria in food. Remember the "danger zone." (40 degrees to 140 degrees) and remember the four basic food safety rules: clean, separate, chill and cook to fight bacteria. Enjoy your summer eating!

<http://www.fsis.usda.gov>

<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov>

In the *Spotlight*



In July 2008, the Seminole County Board of County Commissioners (SCBOCC) began their worksite wellness program. To insure their success, they followed the Wellness Council of Americas (WELCOA) seven benchmarks of a successful worksite wellness program, and organized a wellness committee of employees who are passionate about health and wellness. The committee did their homework and took the next step of getting senior leadership support and participation. It is to this committee that Steve Waring, Special Projects Program Manager, attributes the success of their new wellness program.

According to SCBOCC, it was important to start small and grow the program. The first activity they tackled was the health fair, where they were able to provide the health risk assessment and health screenings to over 300 county employees. From that springboard, they moved into building the wellness website and promoting smaller programs such as the National Walk @ Lunch Day. Most recently, they began the Shape Up Seminole Wellness Challenge to encourage active lifestyles through friendly competition. Mr. Waring shares that, "Wellness is a culture that is starting to grow throughout the County and employees are getting excited. They wear their active healthy lifestyles as a badge of honor."

Fresh & Healthy

Recipe of the Month

BBQ Lentils

Here's a twist to the favorite BBQ beans seen at summertime picnics and cookouts. This recipe is packed with fiber and protein, and even provides a serving of your daily vegetables, including garlic, the vegetable of the month.

Ingredients:

- 12 oz barbeque sauce
- 3-1/2 cups water
- 1 lb dry lentils
- 2 green peppers, diced
- 2 red peppers, diced
- 2 small onions, diced
- 1 cloves garlic, minced

Directions:

- Combine all ingredients in slow cooker.
- Cover and cook on LOW for 6-8 hours
- Serves 8.

Nutritional Analysis:

Per Serving: Calories: 270; Total fat: 1g; Saturated fat: 0g; Cholesterol: 0g; Sodium: 480mg; Carbs: 53g; Dietary fiber: 15g; Sugars: 17g; Protein: 16g; Vitamin A: 25%; Vitamin C: 110%; Calcium: 4%; Iron: 30%
(Based on 2,000 calorie diet.)

For more information about the Vegetable of the Month go to:
<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov>



Salt in the American diet.

Are your taste buds hurting your health?

Salt. It adds flavor to our food and acts as a preservative to reduce the growth of microorganisms. It's inexpensive and so widely available that you can find it in just about any restaurant or household. In fact, salt, also known as sodium chloride, iodized salt or sea salt, is so prevalent in the American diet that you don't even have to pick up a salt shaker to consume far more than the Adequate Intake (AI) of 1,500mg/day set by the US Dietary Guidelines.

There's an abundance of scientific evidence linking excessive salt intake to a wide variety of diseases and health issues. The relationship between sodium intake and blood pressure is progressive and continuous. This means that as a person continues to consume a diet high in salt, their blood pressure continues to increase over time. Recent data indicates that 60% of the American population has hypertension (high blood pressure) or pre-hypertension.

The minimum average requirement for adults is 115 mg of sodium per day but due to the wide variation of patterns of physical activity, climates and hydration, a safe minimum intake is set at 500 mg/day. Determining a precise Upper Limit (UL) is difficult because of individual differences in environment, weight, physical activity, potassium intake, alcohol intake and genetic factors. According to the US Dietary Guidelines, "On average, the higher an individual's salt (sodium chloride) intake, the higher an individual's blood pressure. Nearly all Americans consume substantially more salt than they need. Decreasing salt intake is advisable to reduce the risk of elevated blood pressure." Yet the US Dietary Guidelines suggested UL is still set at 2,300mg sodium. Unfortunately, large food companies have an economic stake in the argument about where the Adequate Intake (AI) and Upper Limit (UL) are set in spite of the prevailing scientific evidence.

The Salt Institute, which is backed by many large food companies, argues that people with a normal blood pressure don't need to be concerned about their salt intake.

They maintain that the 75% of the US population that has not been diagnosed with hypertension does not need to reduce their salt intake and that only one-third to one-half of those with hypertension need to reduce their salt intake due to "salt-sensitivity". Individuals with salt sensitivity see a decrease in their blood pressure when they reduce salt intake for a week or two. This would be akin to the idea that if a smoker with lung cancer quit smoking for a week or two and they didn't see an improvement in their lung tissue, they shouldn't bother to quit smoking. Consequently, smoking and hypertension are responsible for the largest number of deaths in the US.

What can you do?

The National Institute of Health DASH (Dietary Approach to Stop Hypertension) diet is a helpful guide to reducing salt intake and increasing potassium. Potassium helps to reduce the toxic effects of salt/sodium. Diets rich in potassium may help to maintain a healthy blood pressure. The recommended intake of potassium for most adults is 4,700mg per day. Good sources of potassium include sweet and white potatoes, tomato paste, tomato puree, cooked greens (spinach, beet greens), winter squash, cooked dry beans and soybeans, bananas and plantains, carrot juice, prune juice, oranges and orange juice, cantaloupe, and honeydew melons and whole-grain wheat flour.

<http://www.plosmedicine.org>

<http://www.health.gov>

<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov>

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov>

www.saltinstitute.org



Are you interested in making healthy changes to your diet but need some guidance?



The Next Steps team has Health Coaches who will work with you one-on-one developing goals and helping you to learn more about good nutrition, free of charge. Email us at NextSteps@bcbsfl.com or call 1-800-477-3736 ext. 54837.



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