

## Healthy Living

**T**hink about the last time you were in an airplane ready to take off. If you are one of the many who prefers to stay grounded, the steward or stewardess demonstrates the use of an oxygen mask if air pressure drops. The message is given very clearly:

*If you are traveling with a child, secure your oxygen mask first, then place the mask on the child.*

Why?

The answer is simple. You are best able to care for others if you have taken steps to care for YOU! If you pass out on the plane due to lack of oxygen, you are unable to care for others, right?

Every day, you work tirelessly serving our students. You prepare breakfasts, lunches, snacks, after school meals, and more. In addition to providing healthy meals and snacks, students rely on you for advice, and on many occasions, share their happy and at times, not so happy news with you. Our students rely on YOU!

Let's focus on you for a minute. Ask yourself – have I had my routine check-ups? Am I taking good care of myself? Think back to the message on the plane. If you aren't taking steps to care for YOU, you are doing yourself a disservice. It's important to take care of YOU!

### Below are a few tips to assist YOU:

#### ARE YOU GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP?

Everyone is busy; especially around this time of year! Sleep plays a vital role in good health and well-being throughout your life.

- Sleep helps your brain work properly. During sleep, your brain

is preparing for the next day! Your brain is creating new pathways so that you are able to learn and retain information.

- If you are sleep deficient, you may have problems decision making, controlling your behavior and emotions, and coping with change.
- Sleep deficiency has also been linked to depression, suicide and risk-taking behaviors.
- Sleep is involved in healing and repair of the heart and blood vessels. Prolonged sleep deficiency has been linked to an increased incidence of heart disease, kidney disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and stroke.
- Lack of sufficient sleep has also resulted in higher incidences of obesity.
- Our immune systems rely on sleep to stay healthy. If you are sleep deficient, your body may have difficulty fighting infections.

#### ARE YOU DRINKING ENOUGH WATER?

We all need water to survive, but why? Your body weight is about 60% water. Water is present in all cells.

- Your body loses water through breathing, sweating, and digestion. The amount of water you need depends on a variety of factors, including the climate you live in, your level of physical activity, and overall general health. More about needs later.
- Water does more than just quench your thirst! Your body temperature is regulated with water and it keeps the tissues in your body moist. When we take care of others, we make sure that children and adults with a fever consume plenty of liquids. Drinking enough water prevents dehydration. Water is lost

during periods of excessive sweating, or conditions that cause vomiting or diarrhea. Other health conditions, such as bladder infections, require consumption of additional water too!

- Staying hydrated keeps optimum amounts of moisture in your eyes, nose, mouth, as well as in your blood, bones, and brain. Water helps to protect the spinal cord!
- Water helps your body remove waste through perspiration, urination and defecation. The kidneys and liver use water to help flush out waste. Water can also help prevent constipation by softening stools and helping the digestive process through the intestinal tract.
- How much water do you need? According to the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies, there is no specific amount required. If you feel thirsty, drink. The IOM states that most people who are in good physical health get enough fluids by drinking water and other beverages when they are thirsty and by drinking a beverage with meals. The average American consumes about 6-8 8oz glasses of fluids daily. If you are wondering if you are properly hydrated, look at your urine. If it's mostly clear, you are probably fine. If it's dark orange, you likely need to consume more water/fluids.

#### PROTEIN: WHY DO YOU NEED? ARE YOU GETTING ENOUGH? TOO MUCH?

- Protein is a component of every cell in your body. Hair and nails are made mostly of protein. Our bodies use protein to build and repair tissues; we need protein to make enzymes, hormones and other body chemicals. It is a major component in building bones, muscles, cartilage,

skin and blood. It is also important to note that the body does NOT store protein.

- Protein has many benefits:
  - Reduces muscle loss
  - Builds lean muscle
  - Helps to maintain a healthy weight
  - Curbs hunger
- Protein comes from many sources, including meat, milk and other dairy products, fish and poultry, soy and eggs as well as beans, legumes, and nut butters.
- How much protein do you need daily? Generally, if you follow a lifestyle of normal physical activity and are pretty healthy, your daily calories should be about 20-30% comprised of protein. Based on a 2000 calorie diet, protein intake should be about 400-600 calories. As you can see below, protein requirements can easily be met. What does that look like?

Breakfast: 2 eggs

Lunch: 3 oz meat, poultry, fish (small chicken breast)

Supper: 3 oz meat, poultry, fish (small chicken breast)

- If you follow a vegan or vegetarian diet, protein sources from nuts, seeds, beans and dairy products can provide sufficient protein to meet your needs.
- Is more protein better? Protein tends to curb the appetite because it provides a sense of satiety. The average healthy person does not need to eat additional amounts of protein; however, if large amounts of protein are desired, plant sources are suggested. Research has linked excess quantities of processed meat and red meat to an increased incidence of cancer. Also, excessive animal protein requires the kidneys to dispose of organic acids.

## VITAMINS AND MINERALS

- Vitamins and minerals are essential nutrients because they perform

hundreds of roles in our bodies every day. There is a fine line between getting enough of these nutrients (a good thing), and getting too much (not a good thing). Eating a healthy, balanced diet is the best way to get the right amount of vitamins and minerals that you need. Taking too much of one mineral can result in the deficiency of another. Another reason why a balanced diet is the way to get the right amount of vitamins and minerals! If you take vitamins and minerals, please discuss with your physician first!

### ***Vitamins and minerals working together:***

~ Vitamin D, Calcium, Vitamin K, magnesium and phosphorus protects your bones

~ Fluoride helps bone formation and keeps dental cavities from starting or worsening

~ Vitamin D helps your body utilize calcium

~ Vitamin C helps with iron absorption

~ B vitamins (thiamine, riboflavin, niacin, pantothenic acid and biotin help with providing energy.

~ Vitamin C aids in the production of collagen, which supports blood vessels, aids in wound healing, and helps with the formation of teeth and bones.

~ Iron carries oxygen throughout the body

~ Zinc helps with blood clotting, and bolsters the immune system.

### ***Antioxidants***

~ Antioxidant is a general term for any compound that can counteract unstable molecules (such as free radicals) that can damage DNA, cell membranes, and other parts of cells.

~ Free radicals (not good), are a natural byproduct of energy metabolism and are also generated by UV rays, tobacco smoke, and air pollution. Their chemical composition is unstable which causes

them to “steal” components from other molecules, which is how cells are damaged.

~ Antioxidants are able to neutralize the

# Healthy Living



free radicals by allowing the free radical to “steal” parts of the antioxidant to prevent other cells from being damaged.

~ Your body cells naturally produce plenty of antioxidants. Some food sources include:

- Carotenoids – lycopene in tomatoes, lutein in kale
- Flavonoids – anthocyanins in blueberries, quercetin in apples and onions, catechins in green tea
- Vitamins C & E and selenium
- In summary, eating a healthy diet is the best way to get your antioxidants.

Hopefully, the message is clear. You give wonderful care to others every day! It is important to make sure that you are taking good care of YOU! We are all busy and have little time for ourselves. But, remember, we can't do our best helping others when we aren't well. So, hopefully, the points above will resonate with you!

Thank you for nourishing the bodies and minds of our children every day. Best wishes for a happy and healthy holiday season – and a wonderful 2018!

*Marla Caplon, R.D., L.D.  
Nutrition Chair*