



Visualize the Portion Size

Controlling your weight is a matter of controlling the amount of calories you consume versus the amount you expend in movement through daily activities and exercise. Many foods, like fruits, vegetables, beans, cooked whole grains, fat-free dairy, and lean protein are naturally low in calories. So, if you base your diet on these, you will feel fuller on fewer calories than if you eat high-calorie sugary and fatty foods like baked goods, fried foods, chips and other processed foods.

In addition to WHAT you eat, you have to be aware of HOW MUCH you eat. It is a good idea to write down what you eat in a day and figure out how many calories you are eating. Being aware of common portion sizes is a good idea.

Food	Approximate size	Visual Cue
Salad Dressing	1 teaspoon	half dollar
Cheese	1 ounce	your thumb or 2 dominoes
Roll	1 roll	bar of soap
Bread	1 slice	cd case
Meat	3 ounces	deck of cards
Rice	½ cup	custard cup
Spaghetti	2 ounces dry	nickel (diameter), cooked = 1 cup
Raisins, dried fruit	¼ cup	golf ball
Sour cream	¼ cup	golf ball
Yogurt, green salad, medium piece of fruit, baked potato	1 cup	baseball
Mayonnaise, margarine	1 teaspoon	die or thimble
Grilled or baked fish	3 ounces	checkbook
Nuts	1 ounce	2 shot glasses
Chocolate	1 ounce	dental floss container
Oil, salad dressing	1 tablespoon	matchbook

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Reduce your risk of heart disease by 40% by exercising five hours or more a week. You can also reduce your risk 23% by working out with weights 30 minutes 3 times a week.

Three 10 minute intervals of aerobic exercise a day can be just as beneficial as one 30-minute session.

To find out how much you should eat from the various food groups, visit www.mypyramid.gov. You can put in your age, sex, height, weight and physical activity level for a personalized eating plan. The interactive tools help you plan and assess your food intake and physical activity levels.

5 Ways to a Lower Grocery Bill & Better Health

Written by: Pamela Redwine, Nutrition and Food Safety Area Agent

Everyone is watching their dollars and food dollars are no exception. Follow these 5 tips to lower your grocery bill and make healthier food choices.

1. **Switch to oatmeal.** Buy bulk oatmeal instead of boxed cereal – pay \$0.13 per ounce instead of \$0.40 per ounce – save almost \$400 per year for 4 people! Eat less sugar and sodium and more soluble fiber, too! Did you know that a tub of oatmeal contains 30 servings while a box of cereal usually contains 10 and they both cost about the same? Oatmeal takes just minutes to prepare in the microwave so you don't lose that much convenience!
2. **Replace chips, crackers and cookies with fresh fruit.** Most fruits cost about \$0.04 per ounce while most chips and cookies are about \$0.30 cents per ounce. Fruit is a much better choice because it contains far fewer calories per ounce and has fiber, too! One banana costs about \$0.29 and it can be a great grab and go breakfast or snack that can keep you out of the fast food lane and vending machine. A delicious peach can quench a sweet tooth and help you avoid the waist-unfriendly nightly splurge on ice cream or cookies. Peaches are just \$0.12 per ounce, too!
3. **Get rid of bottled beverages.** Drink filtered water from the tap. A 12 pack of soda can cost up to \$4.99 for a brand name and it disappears quickly. Water seems as appealing when you have too much soda around. Save about \$400 - \$500 per year for 4 people and eliminate consumption of 27 pounds of sugar a year by a simple switch to filtered tap water. You don't have to spend a lot to get a filter for the spigot or for a filtered pitcher for the refrigerator.
4. **Serve more rice, pasta and potatoes.** Rice, pasta and potatoes bought in bulk are still inexpensive and easy to prepare. You can find all sorts of low-fat recipes online. These 3 items, bought in bulk, in place of frozen or boxed meals, or expensive meats, are much cheaper – around \$0.06 per ounce as compared to \$0.25 - \$0.40 per ounce. PLUS they are much lower in fat and sodium than frozen meals!
5. **Substitute lentils and beans in place of meat more often and use less meat!** Dried beans and lentils are about \$0.05 per ounce and contain a fair amount of fiber and B vitamins plus no saturated fat. Find fun recipes for them on the back of their package or online and make a switch at least a few times per week. Meat is much higher in saturated fat with no fiber and is 5 times the cost; start using less meat gradually and no one will notice. Cutting meat out twice a week can save \$400 per year for a family of four.

Removing Refrigerator Odors

Did you know?

You can find opportunities with upcoming events on Facebook! Visit and "like" these 3 Facebook pages:
Choctaw County Extension Office,
Choctaw County 4-H & MEALionaire

"How do I remove odors from my refrigerator?" is a common question Extension offices receive. Try these tips for a fresher smelling appliance:

- Clean all drawers, racks, and shelves by washing in soapy water and rinsing with clear water. Then, wipe them down with a solution of 1 tablespoon of chlorine bleach per gallon of water.
- Clean the inside of the refrigerator with a mixture of 1 cup of baking soda to a gallon of warm water.
- Put clean, crumpled newspaper that has been sprinkled with water in the refrigerator. Change newspapers every other day for several days.
- Once refrigerator odor has been significantly reduced, place an open box of baking soda inside.

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Simple Steps to Keep your Computer Going (and going, and going, and going!)

Written by: Mariah Smith, Computer Services & Applications

Technology is great when it works. Replacing a computer can cost anywhere from \$500 - \$1500 depending on technical specifications. Computer repair can take anywhere from 1 day to 2 weeks. An average repair shop may charge as much as \$125 to reload a computer, taking 3-6 days, but no attempt is made to recover your data. Saving data will cost on average \$175 with no guarantees and take 6-10 days.

Aside from replacing or repairing computers, dealing with one that is running slow is enough to make most users bang their heads against the desk in frustration. However, most computer problems can be avoided by following 10 simple steps that any user can do. Computers are not malicious by nature, they simply do or don't do, what they're asked to do by the user. Bottom line, the health of your computer is a reflection of you and your computer habits.

Following these 10 steps is an easy way to keep your computer going. Incorporate these steps into your computer routine and they will save your time and money.

1. Resist the urge to click on pop-ups, links in Facebook, etc. - The #1 way people harm their computer is by clicking on something they shouldn't have. People commonly contract a computer virus by clicking on video links in Facebook. The second most common way to infect a computer is by opening email attachments that contain a virus. Always save the attachment by right-clicking on it from email and then left-click Save Target As. Saving the attachment allows your anti-virus program to scan it for possible infections. The third way users harm their computer is by clicking on pop-ups. NEVER click on a pop-up, NEVER run your mouse over it and NEVER click the "X" in the right hand corner to close it. Doing so often gives the virus permission to install itself on your computer. Either press ALT key and F4 key at the same time or right click in the task bar and click Close.

2. Clean the desktop off – If you save documents or programs to the desktop it takes the computer longer to boot up.

3. Empty the trash – When you delete something it goes to the Recycle Bin, the last stop before permanent deletion. You must tell the recycle bin to empty.

4. Defragment the hard drive – Disk defragmentation is a utility software that organizes all of the software and files on your computer. It organizes everything according to file type and size, helping your computer find information faster so that it can retrieve it for you faster. Run disk defragmenter every time you add or remove software. (Note: Do NOT run disk defragmenter on SSD, Solie State Drive, as it will ruin the computer.)

5. Keep it cool – Computers can get very hot. They have two fans that run constantly to help circulate air through the computer. One fan sits directly on the processor and the other is at the back of the computer. If your computer gets too hot, the central processing unit will overheat and literally fry the motherboard. Before it gets to that point, you will notice that the computer acts sluggish or begins doing odd things. Make sure there is at least six inches of space at the front of the computer and at the back so the fans can draw cool air into the computer to keep it from getting too hot.

6. Run Spybot Search & Destroy once a month – Spybot Search & Destroy is freeware that can be downloaded from www.safer-networking.org. It looks for spyware, a piece of software that downloads itself to your computer without your permission and then reports back to a third-party on your computer activity. If Spybot does not run properly, that's a good indication that there is spyware or malware running on the computer that is preventing it from running. You can try to run Spybot in your computer's safe mode to see if it can remove the spyware.

7. Get rid of temporary Internet files – Every time you visit a website it stores a copy of the images and frames for the website on your computer. So the next time you visit the website it will load more quickly. The only problem is that if you visit a website with a virus or spyware on it, that can be saved to your computer. If you've had pop-ups appear for no apparent reason, there's a good chance it is due to an infected website that is stored in your temporary Internet Files. Delete temporary Internet files once a month or after you have visited a suspicious website to speed up your computer.

8. Just say no to cookies – Cookies store small pieces of information on your computer every time you visit a website. Most cookies are good and can help you perform tasks quickly, but some are harmful. They store information you do not want to keep or they can become corrupt and cause problems when trying to retrieve information from the web. Cookies should be deleted once a month.

9. Run Windows critical updates bi-weekly – The Microsoft Windows Operating System is the most widely used operating system in the world.

Thus, many hackers try to write a software program that attempts to harm computers that use it. When Microsoft discovers a vulnerability in its Operating System, the company releases a 'patch' to update the operating system and protect it. You should check for Windows Critical Updates bi-weekly. To check, open Internet Explorer and left-click on the Tools button. In the drop down menu, left-click Windows Update. In the Update screen, left-click Express and follow the on-screen prompts.

10. Update anti-virus software weekly – No computer should be on the Internet without anti-virus protection. All anti-virus programs can be set to update automatically. However, if a virus, Trojan or spyware infect your computer, it can cause the anti-virus program to quit updating. If your computer is running slow or acting oddly, check to make sure your anti-virus software is current or that it will do a manual update. The first thing a virus will attack is the anti-virus software. If it can disable your software, it can install more malicious software on your computer.

Disaster Recovery – Timber loss

The Mississippi State University Extension Service, in conjunction with the Southern Regional Extension Forestry and North Carolina State University Extension Forestry, is hosting two webinars May 18 to help landowners learn how to make insurance claims for timber and shade tree casualty losses.

Debbie Gaddis, MSU Extension forestry timber taxation specialist, said the two webinars will be offered May 18. The session on timber casualty losses will last from 11:00 -12:30 p.m. and the session on shade tree casualty losses will run from 2 to 3:30 p.m. Both are free and available online.

"Damage and destruction of timber due to weather events, such as the recent storms, is considered a casualty loss. It is also possible to claim a casualty loss for damaged shade trees," Gaddis said. "Claiming a casualty loss on the federal tax return is not as simple as determining the fair market value of the damaged timber. This webinar will give basic information on how to determine if a loss is deductible and claim these losses."

Visit <http://www.forestrywebinar.net> on the day of the webinar, and click on "Upcoming Webinars" to find the session. Participants must download a free software program at least an hour before the program to participate. After that, click on the name of the desired session to join the scheduled program. It is best to sign in 15 minutes before the scheduled time. The webinars are designed for land managers, land owners, natural resource professionals, tax preparers and anyone else with an interest in this subject. 1.5 Cat 1 CFEs have been applied for from the Society of American Foresters. For more information, contact Gaddis at (662) 325-8002 or dgaddis@cfr.msstate.edu.

Lawn & Garden Tips for April - May

The Choctaw County Soil and Water Conservation District has purchased a Litter Spreader for rental to farmers who wish to spread chicken litter on their farms. The charge for renting the equipment is \$150.00 per day with a \$50.00 deposit. The deposit may be used toward payment for use of the equipment or reimbursed upon return of the equipment.

It is recommended that anyone renting the litter spreader have at least a 60-65 horsepower, well maintained tractor in order to pull the spreader.

Anyone interested in renting the spreader may contact the Choctaw County Soil and Water Conservation District at (662) 285-6250 or come in to the office at 573 South Louisville Street in Ackerman.



When purchasing plants, look for the healthiest plants possible. Make sure the plants have healthy, white roots.

April

- Transplant potted Easter lilies after the blooms die.
- By mid-April, the soil temperature is warm enough to plant and the danger of frost is supposed to be over.
- When the night temperatures are consistently above 55 degrees Fahrenheit, it is safe to plant tender bulbous, tuberous, and rhizome plants, such as canna, caladium, elephant ear, dahlia, ginger lily and tuberose. You can still lift and divide perennials if the plants do not have full top growth or have not started to bloom.
- Set out vegetable transplants or sow seed.
- Planting sweet corn during the second week of April will give you roasting ears by July. Early plantings also have less worm problems than later plantings.
- If needed, prune summer flowering shrubs such as roses and crape myrtles.

May

- Fertilize daylilies now to encourage numerous bloom sets.
- The foliage of spring flowering bulbs (tulip, daffodil, hyacinth) is turning yellow and can be cut back.
- Spraying every 7 to 10 days with insecticides and fungicides is the only way to have beautiful, unblemished fruit. Apples are prone to have cedar-apple rust, bitter rot and/or scab. Pears get fire blight and leaf spot. Peaches and plums get brown rot or bacterial spot and have worms in the fruit. So the only way to have blemish-free, beautiful fruit is to spray regularly until it is ready to harvest. When spraying insecticides make sure you pay close attention to any restriction - especially the number of days before you can safely harvest.
- Fertilize and aerate established lawns or sod and seed new lawns. Make sure to take a soil sample before fertilizing.
- Apply a specialty fertilizer with iron to acid-loving evergreens such as azalea, camellia, gardenia, blueberry and banana shrub. After shrubs have reached the desired size be stingy with the fertilizer. One application annually should be sufficient.
- If needed, prune azaleas when they finish blooming. Inspect azalea plants for leaf gall disease. The leaves and sometimes the flowers become thick, fleshy and turn a pale green or whitish color. Hand pick and bag up the infected parts before the powdery white spores are released. There is only one outbreak each year so don't put this chore off.

Coldwater Fish Die Offs

With the warmer weather, people begin to turn their attention to their ponds. It is this time of year, typically February to April, that calls begin coming in about sick and dying fish in the backyard pond. Usually it is a few fish per day, often catfish but maybe a mixture of species, and the die off may continue for several weeks. Fish often show external signs of distress, including patches of fungus, red sores, and sometimes large ulcers in the head or back.

The problem is most likely the pond water itself. Many locations in Mississippi have underlying geologies that are low in dissolve ions. Alkalinity, which is a measure of the negatively charged ions dissolved in the water, acts as a buffer for pH changes in the water. Alkalinity encourages primary productivity in ponds and helps prevent wide swings in pH. Hardness is related to alkalinity and is the overall concentration of positive ions. Hardness reduces fish stress in ponds and provides important elements (calcium and magnesium) for animal survival.

For fish production and health, alkalinity and hardness values of at least 20 mg/L are recommended. When values are below 20 mg/L, fish tend to grow slowly, the pond is not very productive, and fish may become stressed and die. The external signs of disease are usually secondary, meaning that the fungus or ulcer is not the cause of the problem, it opportunistically invades an already sick or stressed fish.

The solution to poor water chemistry is relatively simple. To overcome low ion concentrations, one must add ions. The best way to accomplish this is to apply agricultural limestone.

Liming provides major benefits if you are growing sport fish in a pond with poor water chemistry. Limestone reduces the acidity of the bottom soils, which makes nutrients more available, and increases the alkalinity and hardness of the water, which reduces stress on the fish over the winter. Application of limestone typically eliminates cold water fish die offs for several years. However, ions will gradually be flushed from the pond, so liming may be needed every 3-5 years to keep water chemistry at appropriate levels.

If you suspect that your pond may suffer from low alkalinity and hardness, bring pond water (a cup is plenty) to the Choctaw County Extension office in the Courthouse Annex to have the total alkalinity of your pond water tested. There is no charge. If it is below 20 mg/L, liming would be beneficial to the fish population. For more information, request Extension publication 1428 "Managing Mississippi Farm Ponds & Small Lakes."

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