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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Tips for Cooking More at Home 3

Nutrition and Dental Health 4

Tips for Gut Health during Cold and Flu Season 5

Spirituality Corner: Mantras 6

Recipe: Yogurt Herb Sauce 7

Trade the Take-Out for Cooking at Home

For many people, the abundance of food delivery companies and restaurants that offer take-out make getting food on the table easy and stress-free. Grabbing coffee on the way to work saves time in our already hectic morning routines. While take-out can be convenient and quick, especially if we are juggling work, school, family, and friends, it can also take a toll on our wallets and our health.



Making your coffee at home can be much healthier and more cost effective. At home, you might add 2 tsp of sugar to your coffee, which contains around 32 calories. A splash of cream will add around 70 more calories and 5 grams of fat, but coffee drinks from popular franchises can contain surprisingly more. Some Frappuccino drinks have more than 500 calories, and almost 20 grams of fat! Not only that, but these drinks can cost \$5 or more, while a similar cup made at home can cost less than a dollar, depending on the beans used.

Cooking can also be good for mental health, as an outlet for creativity and self-expression. Preparing a meal can provide a sense of accomplishment, and help people learn goal-oriented behavior, which can, in turn, reduce procrastination. Cooking may help reduce anxiety and mental distress and serve as a form of self-care. There is even a type of therapy called culinary or kitchen therapy, in which mental health professionals combine culinary arts, gastronomy, and social relationships to address emotional and physical issues.

(Continued on page 2)

Purchasing pre-made food is almost always more expensive than cooking your own. Not only are you paying for the labor required to cook the food and the labor and gas to deliver it, but you are also paying whatever the mark-up is on that food so that the restaurant can turn a profit. Purchasing whole, real ingredients at the grocery store is almost always going to be less expensive.

Cooking at home gives you more control. If you have any food restrictions or are trying to avoid certain ingredients in your food, such as gluten, dairy, meat, sugar, etc., it is much easier to do so when you cook for yourself. You also have control over portion size. Restaurant portions are usually 2-3 times the size of what is recommended. Studies show that when we are served more food, we tend to eat more food. So, one of the first steps in weight control is to learn portion control. When you do eat food from a restaurant, consider saving half of it for another meal, or sharing it.



Trade the Take-Out for Cooking at Home (continued)

You might also consider take-out's effect on the environment. Not only is someone driving and probably using gas to transport food from the restaurant to your home, but food must also be packaged for transport, often in less-than-environmentally-friendly packaging. Paper bags, coffee cups, plastic containers, single-serve condiment packets, single-use utensils, etc. are all usually included with take-out, even if you are eating at home. Preparing your food at home greatly reduces your ecological footprint. Not sure what an ecological footprint is, or curious about how big your footprint might be? Check out this website with an ecological footprint calculator: <https://www.footprintcalculator.org/home/en>

Include your kids, if you have them, in the planning, purchasing, and preparation of meals. This is an important life skill that will enable them to have more control over their physical and financial health as adults.

If you are still on the fence about reducing your take-out purchases, try doing the math on what you spend on a monthly basis. If you spend \$5 on coffee three times a week, that adds up to \$60 a month. If you order in twice a week and spend \$25 each time, that totals to \$200 a month. Think about what else you could do with \$260 a month. Join a gym? Increase your contributions to your retirement plan? Save up for a family vacation? Or save the money in an emergency fund to give yourself better peace of mind?

You might still be saying, "but I don't have time to cook." Consider that you also spend time waiting in line for coffee and waiting at home for food delivery. It is true that you can use that waiting time to complete other tasks, such as answering emails or decompressing in front of the TV. However, using some of that time to mindfully prepare a coffee for yourself, or cook a meal with your children, may be time much more well-spent.

Are you passionate about...

Health & Wellness, Cooking, Gardening, Fitness, Dancing, Cultural Diversity, Health Education or Journalism?

Become a Wellness Ambassador for your campus!

Contact Margaret Clayton, Director of Nutrition & Wellness, at mclayton@cbhi.net.



Tips for Cooking More at Home

Customize Your Coffee:

- There are so many ways to make coffee at home, from a simple pour-over for one cup, to coffee machines with timers so a whole pot is ready when you wake up, to French presses, espresso machines, etc. Choose which one fits your lifestyle and budget and invest in it.
- If you love a fancier cup of coffee, experiment with different beans, steamed milk, and additions like cocoa powder and cinnamon. You can also purchase many of the syrups that coffee chains add, but at home you can control the amount you add. Making coffee at home will pay off quickly.

Have Easy Meals on Hand:

- A box of pasta and a jar of tomato sauce can be made in about 10 minutes. You can use that time to throw together a salad to go alongside.
- Boil some rice and toss in chopped fresh vegetables like broccoli and carrots to steam in the last few minutes of cooking. Fry an egg to put over top, and add a few splashes of soy sauce, sriracha, or teriyaki sauce.
- Tortillas can be filled with vegetables and any protein you enjoy for quick wraps. Add salsa, hummus, or salad dressing.

Meal Prep for the Week Ahead:

- Cook a large batch of chicken, then use it in sandwiches, to top salads, to toss with pasta, or to go over rice.
- A large casserole, or a pot of stew, soup, or chili can be eaten for multiple meals. Add sides like salad, garlic bread, or grilled cheese to stretch it.
- Make a large batch of a healthy whole grain, like farro, brown rice or quinoa (technically a seed, but often used as a grain). Then add a protein like chicken, salmon, tofu, or a fried egg and any vegetables you enjoy, like shredded carrots, sliced radishes, cooked greens, etc. to create different “bowls” each night.

Invest in Storage Containers and an Insulated Lunchbox:

- Glass storage containers can be expensive, but they can safely be heated in the microwave and thrown in the dishwasher. With a little care, they last a very long time.
- An insulated lunch box can also help you keep your food cold so it is safe to eat many hours later, even if you don't have access to a refrigerator. These items will pay for themselves with the money you save by bringing your own lunch to work.



A Little Positive Reinforcement Goes a Long Way:

- Every time you choose to make coffee at home, pack your own lunch, or skip take-out to throw something together yourself, take the money you would have spent and put it in a special account, or just in a jar at home. At the end of the month, see how much you have saved.

Nutrition and Dental Health

Maintaining your dental health is not just about having a nice smile. Poor dental health can cause issues elsewhere in the body. Cavities and gum disease increase one's risk of heart disease and stroke, and cause chronic inflammation, which can have far-reaching effects on the body. Losing teeth can result in difficulties chewing and speaking, and can also affect us socially as we may become reluctant to smile and reveal our dental issues.



Most dentists recommend coming in for a cleaning every six months or so, and of course brushing your teeth at least twice a day. Flossing daily or cleaning between teeth with a water pick can help to dislodge food and bacteria from the hard-to-reach spaces between teeth. The American Dental Association (ADA) also recommends the use of fluoride in water and toothpaste to prevent tooth decay in both children and adults. While these practices are vital to maintain oral hygiene, the food and beverage choices we make also make a difference.

There are a variety of nutrients that are particularly important for dental health. Calcium is probably the most well-known, as it is an important component of teeth and bones. **Calcium helps strengthen the enamel on our teeth, which helps prevent decay.** Food sources are not just limited to dairy, such as milk, yogurt and cheese. Green leafy vegetables such as kale, broccoli, and bok choy are excellent sources of calcium, as are almonds and canned fish, like salmon and sardines.

Vitamin D is essential for our bodies to use the calcium we consume, so it is also important in dental

health. Our bodies make vitamin D when our skin is exposed to sunlight, but many people, especially in northern climates, do not get enough sunshine year-round to produce adequate vitamin D. Cow's milk and milk substitutes are usually fortified with vitamin D to help our bodies absorb the calcium they contain. Other food sources include mushrooms and fatty fish, like salmon, mackerel, and sardines.

Phosphorous works in tandem with calcium to strengthen teeth and repair and maintain enamel.

Many animal foods, such as meat, poultry, and fish, are high in phosphorus. Plant sources include beans, nuts, seeds, and whole grains.

And since oral health includes our gums and other tissues in the mouth, **vitamin C and vitamin A are also important.** Vitamin C helps in the production of collagen, which is a structural protein in skin and other tissues. In the mouth, it helps strengthen the gums. Vitamin C deficiency can lead to bleeding gums and gum disease. Food sources of vitamin C are citrus fruits, bell peppers, strawberries, broccoli, and many other fruits and vegetables. Vitamin A helps build and maintain the salivary glands and mucous membranes of the mouth, which in turn help keep the mouth moist and resistant to bacteria and other pathogens. Good food sources include carrots, sweet potatoes, spinach and liver.

In addition to consuming these vital nutrients in our diets, there are also some foods that may specifically promote oral health, and some that may be detrimental.

Crunchy fruits and vegetables can stimulate the gums and increase saliva production, which helps naturally cleanse the mouth and clear bacteria. The fiber they contain can help scrub away food particles and remove plaque from teeth. Green and black teas contain polyphenols that kill harmful bacteria in the mouth, thereby possibly reducing the risk of cavities and gum disease. And good news for cheese lovers --cheese helps balance the pH of the mouth, reducing the acid that can lead to tooth decay.



(Continued on page 5)

Nutrition and Dental Health (continued)

There are definitely some foods to limit or avoid in terms of oral health. Perhaps the biggest offender is sugar.

Sugar feeds the bacteria in our mouths, which then produce acid that can lead to tooth decay. Sweetened foods like soda, candy, and baked goods should be limited. Acidic foods can also be a problem, as the acid they contain can break down tooth enamel. Acidic foods to limit include soda, coffee, and wine. There are also many healthy foods that are acidic, such as citrus fruits, tomatoes, pineapple and many fermented foods. While it is still advisable for most people to include these in the diet for their health benefits, you may want to rinse your mouth with water after consuming them. Avoid brushing your teeth right after consuming acidic foods as that can further break down enamel. In fact, the ADA recommends not brushing for at least 60 minutes after eating at all to prevent damage to tooth enamel.

Lastly, don't underestimate the importance of water to oral health. Water is needed to produce saliva, which bathes and cleanses the oral cavity, but drinking water itself can help flush bacteria from the mouth.

Regular dental visits, a good brushing and flossing routine, and fluoridated toothpaste can go a long way toward good oral health, but **remember to consider your diet as well.** Including sources of calcium, phosphorus, and vitamins D, A, and C, crunchy fresh vegetables, tea, and cheese, while avoiding excess sugar will help keep your teeth healthy and strong.



Tips for Keeping Your Gut Healthy through Cold and Flu Season

Many people are prescribed antibiotics for a variety of reasons, especially as we pass through cold and flu season. **Antibiotics are a great tool to fight off bacterial infections, but unfortunately, they don't discriminate when it comes to killing bacteria – and that includes the good bacteria we want living in our guts.** In healthy people, the gut microbiome will replenish itself after a round of antibiotics, although it may take time and be less diverse than before.

If you've been prescribed a round of antibiotics recently, or just want an extra boost for gut health, consider a few of these tips.

Up your fiber intake: Fiber serves as a probiotic, or food for the good bacteria we want living in our guts. Bananas, anything in the allium family (garlic, onions, shallots, leeks), oats, beans, asparagus and artichokes all contain the type of fiber that is particularly good for nourishing gut bacteria.

Eat fermented foods: Fermented foods that contain live active cultures can help repopulate the gut microbiome. Kimchi, miso, kefir, yogurt, sauerkraut, and pickles are all

good choices. Make sure, however, that the products you purchase still contain live cultures. For example, shelf-stable pickles or canned sauerkraut will not contain live bacteria. Fermented foods that are still "alive" will usually be refrigerated and you will often be able to see bubbles from the gas being produced by the living organisms present. You can also look for labels that say "live active cultures."

Avoid excess saturated fat, processed foods, and artificial sweeteners: Some studies have shown that including these in the diet in excess can reduce microbial diversity in the gut and potentially even feed bad bacteria. Limit red meat, processed meats, and processed foods like chips, frozen dinners, and shelf-stable baked goods.

Consider a probiotic: The jury is out on whether taking probiotic supplements improves gut health, but it certainly doesn't hurt. If you have tried all of the above and still feel that your system is off balance, you might consider adding a probiotic supplement.

Spirituality Corner: Mantras

by Erin Lubniewski, Occupational Therapist at Crestwood Treatment Center Fremont

A mantra is a form of spiritual practice thought to have originated in India before 1000 BC. It is most often associated with Hinduism and Buddhism, but it can be found throughout a variety of cultures and faith traditions.

Traditionally, a mantra is a sacred word or sound associated with deity, which is repeated frequently to help connect with the divine. As the practice has been popularized outside more traditional faith systems, **it has been more generally identified as words or phrases repeated to anchor attention during mindfulness or to provide a focal point toward achieving a goal or aspiration**. A mantra can be said silently to oneself, out loud and alone, or together in a group with others.

Some mantras aren't much concerned with the actual word, but rather focus more on sound vibrations, rhythms, and frequencies as a path to connect with the divine. Other mantras are more concerned with the deep spiritual meanings of repeated words or phrases, often coming from sacred texts or prayers. Both methods generally seek to move from individual to connection with something bigger.

For example, below are 3 traditional mantras:

- **Om:** This is a sacred sound in many spiritual traditions, and in Hinduism it is considered to be the first sound of the universe.
- **So hum:** It reflects the natural rhythm of breathing and in Sanskrit it means "I am that." And "that" can be interpreted to mean the Universe, meaning our energy is interconnected. It is believed to help harmonize the body's energy flow and provide physical and emotional healing powers.
- **Lokah samastah sukhino bhavantu:** Similar to a loving kindness meditation, this Sanskrit mantra translates to something like, "May all beings be happy and free from suffering." It brings to mind our interdependence on one another.

Less traditional mantras, and positive affirmations, have become increasingly popular in wellness and self-improvement spaces. It is believed that the more we repeat something, the more likely we are to believe it and

live by it. Positive phrases also have the power to help us focus and persevere through physical and emotional challenges. Like mindfulness, a mantra practice could help lower stress, anxiety, blood pressure, and heart rate to help us feel calmer and strengthen self-awareness and self-compassion.

Below are some examples of general personal mantras:

"I am strong."

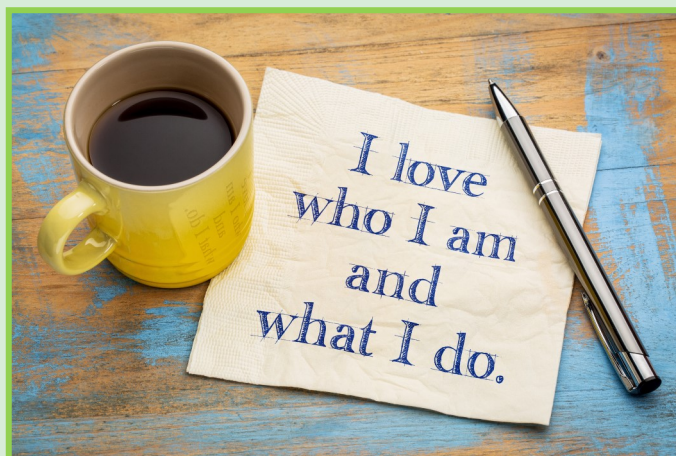
"I can make a real difference."

"I am conquering my fears and becoming stronger each day."

"I am more powerful than my pain."

"I am in tune with the universe."

One does not need to be a follower of a specific spiritual group in order to incorporate the practice and benefits of mantras into their life. **As you start 2025 and consider your goals and intentions, consider whether a mantra practice might be helpful for you.** Experiment with the process by choosing a mantra that speaks to you, finding a comfortable posture, closing your eyes, and repeating the mantra for a short period of time to see how it feels. If this practice resonates with you, online resources are plentiful to learn more about the history of mantras, discover many different ones, and watch and listen to them on YouTube.



Recipe: Yogurt Herb Sauce

This recipe is good for both your teeth and your gut. Made with yogurt, it is full of calcium and healthy microbes. The fresh green herbs add vitamins C and A, in addition to other vitamins and minerals. This yogurt herb sauce is bright, tangy, and garlicky and it is excellent on meat, poultry, and fish. It can also be used as a salad dressing, dip for vegetables, or drizzled over just about anything. Leave out the jalapenos if you don't like heat.



Ingredients

- 1 cup plain yogurt
- 1-2 garlic cloves
- 1 cup tightly packed fresh herbs—cilantro, mint, and/or parsley
- Juice of 1 lime
- 1 fresh jalapeno, ribbed and seeded (optional)
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- Salt to taste
- Honey to taste

In a food processor or blender, combine all the ingredients and blend until smooth. Store in a covered container in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.

***“You don’t have to cook fancy or complicated masterpieces—
just good food from fresh ingredients.”***

~ Julia Child

Any Health and Wellness News Questions?

Contact Margaret M. Clayton, M.S. at mclayton@cbhi.net