



* Protected Under 18 U.S.C. 707

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service • Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources

Special Food Needs of Family Members

Food contains some 40 nutrients man needs to stay healthy. The greater the variety of foods you eat daily, the less likely you are to become lacking in a single nutrient.

Everyone needs the same nutrients. The different amounts depend on age, sex, and activity. Periods of rapid growth and development increase the need for certain nutrients, especially during the teenage years.

Rapid Growth Periods

Infancy. During the first year of life, the infant grows and develops more rapidly than any other year of life. The main food source in the diet is milk. By the end of the first year, the baby should be eating strained and chopped red meats as well as a variety of other foods.

Preschool. Food is important for the preschooler. It is not a period of rapid growth, but the time when he learns to know and like foods. This is an excellent time to introduce a variety of red meats, such as ground or chopped lamb, pork, or beef. The preschooler enjoys eating with his hands, picking up bite-sized pieces.

School Age Years. Although children 6 to 12 years old are growing slowly, they are storing nutrients for periods of rapid growth during the teen years. At school, children learn to eat new and different foods. Eating a serving of protein such as pork sausage or Canadian bacon for breakfast is important. A protein source is recommended to keep from feeling hungry during the morning. Breakfast helps the child stay alert and active for work and play at school. School aged children require two 2 to 3 ounce servings of meat group foods daily.

Teenagers. Teens choose the foods to eat just as they determine favorite sports, fashions, music, and dancing. They generally eat more foods away from home at fast-food restaurants. Teens should select foods wisely for mealtime and snacking whether eating at home, school, church, or at fast food and drive-in restaurants. Teens are influenced by their friends and may want to try unusual patterns of eating such as vegetarianism (see the 4-H Red Meats fact sheet "Red Meats and Vegetarianism"), or they might try fad diets, which are not adequate in nutrients necessary for proper growth and development in an attempt to lose weight rapidly. Careful selection of a well-balanced diet is recommended.

Adults. Variety of foods in the diet selected from the basic food groupings and foods eaten in moderation are important. Adults can get the nutrients necessary to produce energy for work and play, to build resistance against disease, and to replace old body cells by selecting wisely from these group-

ings. Two 2 to 3 ounce servings of red meats or other meat group foods can help adults maintain their ideal weight.

If weight control for the treatment of a specific condition, such as obesity, heart disease, or diabetes is recommended by the doctor, selecting lower-caloried foods from the food groupings is recommended. Leaner cuts of red meats with the fat trimmed are best. Red meats should be prepared by either baking, broiling, boiling, or roasting. Flour added to meats, sauces, or gravies with extra calories should be avoided. Red meats provide the high-quality protein and some fat necessary for keeping a person from feeling hungry throughout the day. Persons with a condition known as "hypoglycemia" are advised to eat at least 2 ounces of red meat or meat group foods six times a day to prevent them from feeling hungry or shaky, which are symptoms of hypoglycemia.

Older Adults. Elderly or inactive people may eat very small amounts of food because of the decreased need for energy. They must select food wisely, avoiding foods high in calories and low in nutrients such as candies, cakes, sugars, fats, and alcohol. Overweight also may be a problem with advancing age. Some older adults have problems chewing foods. Red meats may be chopped, ground, or pureed if chewing is a problem. Older adults also are influenced by food faddists, who stress the need to take vitamin supplements. A variety of foods eaten every day will help ensure good nutrition without taking extra vitamins.

Meats and other meat group foods are important sources of protein needed for fast healing, preventing fatigue, and lessening the susceptibility to infection. These foods are good sources of iron necessary for healthy blood. Older adults also need two 2 to 3 ounces serving of meat group foods daily.

Pregnancy. This period of great growth demands that the expectant mother be well fed for her own continued development, and for that of her baby. Possible nutrient supplements may be prescribed by a doctor for women who are pregnant or breast feeding. As the baby grows and develops, more nutrients must be supplied. Wise selection from the basic food groupings with extra servings of milk is important. Red meats or other meat group foods supply the high-quality protein necessary for this important growth period, which affects two lives.

Remember to assure an adequate diet by choosing the recommended number of servings for each food group according to your age and needs. Red meats or meat group foods are important sources of nutrients throughout your entire life.

Activity 1

Now that you are a more advanced 4-H member, you might enjoy using this information to teach junior 4-H group or your younger family members. Puppets are a fun way to teach them. Make your own puppets out of large unshelled peanuts, colored felt tip pens or markers, and a small, sharp knife. Cut the bottom off the peanut shell and remove the nuts. Then decorate the shell for the different age groups discussed in this fact sheet. Glue hats, clothes, yarn, beads, and other things to decorate your puppets. Then present a nutrition puppet show and let the junior 4-Hers ask the finger puppets nutrition questions.

Activity 2

Observe the lunch period at a day care center for pre-schoolers, a school lunch program for elementary and high school students, a fast-food restaurant, and a feeding site for the elderly or other age groups. What were the meat group foods served at each of these for the particular group? How were the meats cut and prepared? Discuss what you learned about feeding meats to these different age groups.

Now that you have looked at some of these feeding programs for different age groups, describe the differences in meats served for different age groups.

Activity 3

Plan a week's menu for an adult and a teenager, who are both overweight. Follow the familiar food groups and specify the number of recommended servings for each age group. Were they exactly the same for both groups? _____ How were

they alike? _____ How were they different? _____ Show how you can plan a sensible diet without changing the recommended servings. Get additional materials from your county Extension educator related to weight control.

Activity 4

Adults are living longer. Many older adults are living in nursing homes. Study some of the feeding problems of the aged, such as loss of appetite, chewing difficulties, and others. Then call a dietitian in charge of a nursing home food service, and set up a tour for you and other members of your 4-H project group. Jot down any questions you have before the tour concerning the use of red meats in the food service, including questions on storage, food safety, cooking methods, and nutrition.

Activity 5

Many government programs focus on pregnant women and infants. Check with your local health department for the program nearest your area. Set up an interview with the nutritionist who is in charge of the nutrition education. Collect and study the handout materials, and see how important protein and red meats are for young pregnant women. Ask if you can sit in on a weekly class for these young women. Another excellent resource would be the March of Dimes. This organization also has many resource materials for this group, as well as excellent films, which they can show you and your club. Visit one of these educational agencies to give you a better insight into the increased nutritional needs of pregnant women.