

# NUTRI-NET NEWS

January 1998

## MEDIA MATTERS

This newsletter is a service of the Nutrition Education Network of Wisconsin, funded by a grant from the Food Stamp Program, Food and Nutrition Service, United States Department of Agriculture, and administered through the University of Wisconsin-Madison. It is designed to enhance coordination and communication among agencies and organizations that educate Wisconsin's low income individuals and families about nutrition and food.

*Nutri-Net News* shares brief information about programs and materials that support healthy and enjoyable eating.

### **Make Nutrition Come Alive. It's All About You**

The American Dietetic Association and the Dietitians of Canada will again share a theme and graphic for the 1998 National Nutrition Month® campaign, "Make Nutrition Come Alive. It's All About You." The campaign's goal is to teach consumers in both countries that healthful eating and activity can be tailored to fit their personal nutrition needs and lifestyles. Action-oriented messages developed by the Dietary Guidelines Alliance are woven throughout this year's campaign to encourage people to lead healthy and active lives.

A new *Event Planning Kit* will help make nutrition come alive in your community or workplace while saving hours of planning time. The kit centers on a single activity -- a food fair -- and is adaptable to any meal and any setting, including schools, family shelters, hospital units, and local restaurants. It contains timelines, organizing tips, resources, media support information, and 10 reproducible handouts for adults and children.

ADA has many resources to help communicate National Nutrition Month® messages year-round. Look for the latest products in the *1998 Catalog of Products and Services* in last October's *Journal of The American Dietetic Association*, call ADA's customer service at 800/877-1600, ext. 5000, or check out their web site at: [www.eatright.org/nnm98.html](http://www.eatright.org/nnm98.html)

### **Grains Get Folate**

Beginning January 1, makers of *enriched* grain products are required to add folate to wheat flour, corn meal, pasta and rice. Nutrition educators should note that not all grain products will have folate

#### **Subscription Information**

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# Nutri-Net News

added -- just those that are enriched to begin with -- so it's important to read the label. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has recommended this action because research suggests that additional folate will help prevent neural tube birth defects, which are the most common disabling birth defects. It also has the potential for reducing the risk of heart disease.

Folate is needed most in the first 3 or 4 weeks of pregnancy, before many women know they are pregnant. Fortification will increase the average folate intake for women by about 100 micrograms per day. Women will still need to eat the right foods or take supplements to further reduce their risk of an affected pregnancy.

Four B vitamins (folate, riboflavin, B6, and B12) are needed to help prevent a buildup of homocysteine in the blood. Homocysteine is the amino acid that is emerging as a new risk factor for atherosclerosis and resulting heart attacks and strokes. Only riboflavin is currently added to white flour during enrichment.

A recent study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association suggests that 40 percent of the U.S. population may not consume enough folate to keep blood homocysteine levels low. A 1992 report from the Physician's Health Study found that men whose blood homocysteine levels were in the highest five percent were three times more likely to have a heart attack than men with lower homocysteine levels.

For adults, an average daily intake of 400 micrograms of folate will help maintain normal homocysteine levels as well as prevent neural tube defects in newborns. (See list of food sources.)

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

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#### Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals

Data comparing food intakes of Americans to recommendations in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Guide Pyramid are presented in a new publication called *Pyramid Servings Data: Results from USDA's 1995 and 1996 Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals*. This publication is currently available only on the Internet.

The Food Guide Pyramid was designed to help Americans choose what and how much to eat to get the nutrients they need without excess calories or fat. The Pyramid specifies numbers of servings to eat from the five major food groups and gives advice about fat and added sugars.

The 1995 and 1996 Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals (CFSII) provides estimates of what Americans eat and drink based on information from about 5,000 people, 2 years and older, concerning their food intake on 2 nonconsecutive days. This study uses a new method for converting CFSII data into serving sizes specified by the Pyramid. In addition, foods are categorized according to Pyramid criteria. Foods like pizza, soups, and

Food sources of folate	Amount of folate
1/2 cup raw chopped broccoli	31 micrograms
1/2 cup boiled broccoli	39 micrograms
1 medium orange	40 micrograms
1/2 cup raw chopped spinach	54 micrograms
1/4 cup wheat germ	80 micrograms
1 cup orange juice	110 micrograms
1/2 cup boiled kidney beans	115 micrograms
1/2 cup cooked dark green leafy vegetables such as spinach	130 micrograms
1/2 cup boiled black beans	130 micrograms
1/2 cup boiled chickpeas	140 micrograms
1/2 cup cooked lentils or legumes	180 micrograms
3.5 ounces cooked chicken liver	770 micrograms
1 cup fortified breakfast cereals	100 to 400 micrograms

# Nutri-Net News

pies are separated into their ingredients before servings are counted.

Findings show that in 1995 and 1996, the average diet of Americans 2 years of age and over contained almost 2,000 calories. On average, servings from the fruit, dairy, meat groups were below recommended ranges, and servings from the grain and vegetable groups were near the bottom of recommended ranges. Calories from fats and sugars exceeded Pyramid recommendations.

To access and download, the Internet address is: <http://sun.ars-grin.gov/ars/Beltsville/barc/bhnrc/foodsurvey/home.htm>

## Do the Poor Pay More for Food?

Food security, defined as the availability to everyone of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, is a major goal of the Nation's nutrition programs, including Food Stamps, school feeding, and WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children.) Consuming an adequate diet depends on sufficient purchasing power, but also on access to reasonably priced food. Reducing food insecurity requires understanding why prices the lower income consumers face at the grocery store may be different from higher income consumers as well as how the poor contend with a limited budget.

*Do the Poor Pay More for Food? Item Selection and Price Differences Affect Low-Income Household Food Costs* is an agricultural economic report from USDA's Economic Research Service released in November of 1997. It takes a look at these issues. This was a formidable task because of the complexities of comparing food prices across income groups. Complicating factors included the enormous variety of foods offered for sale, differences in the kinds and locations of stores, and different market basket purchasing practices between lower-income and higher income households. The study examines findings from several food price

and household food consumption and spending surveys, the U.S. Census, and statistics on USDA Food Stamp redemptions. Some of the major findings are summarized below:

- Prices for food items vary with store size, with small stores charging an average of 10 percent more than supermarkets. Supermarkets can charge lower prices because of their "economies of size" and by offering store label and generic items.
- Small foodstores are more likely to locate in low-income, central-city neighborhoods and rural areas than in the suburbs, and supermarkets are more likely to locate in the suburbs.
- Supermarkets in central cities tend to have higher prices than those in suburban areas because central-city business costs are higher and they may have less competition.
- The combined factors of store location and store mix increase the food prices faced by the poor households by 1 percent above the national average.
- In 1992, the poorest 20 percent of the Nation's households (household income averaging \$6,669) spent \$1,249 per person on food, compared with \$1,997 per person for the wealthiest 20 percent (household income averaging \$77,311.)
- Low-income consumers pay less per unit of nearly every major food group, except vegetable and fruit juices, and eggs, than wealthier consumers. This suggests that the poor's food shopping practices more than offset the higher prices they face. For example, low-income households select more economical foods such as store label and generic items, larger package sizes, and lower quality items in order to realize lower food costs.

This report is available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://econ.ag.gov/whatsnew/feature/>

# Nutri-Net News

## NETWORK UPDATE

The greatest effort of the Nutrition Education Network during the last quarter has been in the area of needs assessment. Twenty four guiding questions were developed to explore the diverse needs of the food stamp audience. Data responding to these questions have been assembled into quantitative and qualitative preliminary summaries.

The Wisconsin Extension Nutrition Education Program, in cooperation with the Wisconsin Nutrition Education Network, is developing a web page that will incorporate the needs assessment questions into a decision-tree format. It will assist WENEP county staff and local nutrition educator users in performing a personalized assessment of the needs of their county's food stamp population. It is intended to facilitate planning and evaluating FS nutrition education programming by helping to answer the following questions: 1.) Who are the food insecure in my county? 2.) What are the food and nutrition education needs of the food insecure? and 3.) What are other agencies in my county doing to meet the needs of the food insecure?

A key issue that the Network has chosen to address is: "What can we do from a Network position to encourage local collaborative planning?" The Network's original objectives (see "Network Update" in October's newsletter) were re-examined and revised at the December meeting to reflect this direction.

Revised objectives are as follows:

- Develop a process to determine nutrition needs of low income population.
- Develop guidance for developing needs-based educational objectives at the local level.
- Identify framework for accessing resources that address needs-based educational objectives.

- Incorporate the activities and findings of the Network into the nutrition education plans of members' programs.
- Present Network findings at Wisconsin Nutrition Education Conferences in Spring 1999.

The February 1998 Network meeting will focus on definition of specific action steps to achieve the above objectives.

### OUR MISSION:

The Nutrition Education Network of Wisconsin facilitates collaborative planning of nutrition education programs at the state and local levels. We promote healthful and enjoyable eating so that Wisconsin's low income individuals and families receive consistent, positive, relevant, accurate, and effective nutrition messages.

*Nutri-Net News* is one way that the Network shares information and resources to accomplish this mission.