

PENNY SAVER NEWS

FAX: 932-5261

June 14, 2012

BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.
Food, Nutrition and Health Agent**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

5339 S. County Road 579

Seffner, FL 33584-3334

PH:(813)744-5519 x 136, FAX:744-5776
e-mail:mkeith@ufl.edu**Don't Go Overboard**

Going overboard is not just a problem out on the bay. Sure, falling out of a boat is not a good idea, but neither are a lot of the super simple diet and nutrition recommendations floating around these days. Too many magazine articles, too many books, too many doctors and yes, even dietitians, promote diets or nutrition ideas as either-or. The reality is that very few foods fit into either good or bad categories. Too many weight loss diets tell us to only eat these 6 foods or to never eat foods in a certain food group. If we stuck to any of those extreme diets for more than a few weeks, many of us would end up with some kind of nutritional deficiency instead of better health.

For example: "Fat is bad, avoid it!" If you really could eat a completely fat free diet, you would soon be really sick. Without fat we can not absorb vitamins A, D, E and K. Without fat we can not make many of the hormones our bodies need. We could not make some of the major chemicals that fight infections and inflammation. We might get a little slimmer for awhile, but before long we'd be too sick to care.

"Even if some fat is okay, *trans* fat is really bad and we need to stay away from it completely." Correct, there is no recommended daily value for *trans* fat, and there is no percentage for *trans* fat on a food label. But there are different kinds of *trans* fats and they come from different places. *Trans* fats produced by adding hydrogen to vegetable oils often does become the kind we need to avoid. But it seems that no one told the cows that! They naturally produce some *trans* fats in their muscle and in the cream of milk. Not only do they make their own *trans* fat, but this kind of *trans* fat is actually

being studied as a potential cancer drug. So avoiding all beef and dairy products just to avoid the fat might not be the best idea. Plus, not all the *trans* fat produced by hydrogenation is *trans* fat. The simple fact that hydrogenated oil is listed on the ingredient list is no guarantee that the food contains *trans* fat.

“Gluten free diets are the way to avoid intestinal problems.” For some people that is true. But the only way for a sure diagnosis that gluten is your problem involves an intestinal biopsy, snipping a tiny bit of tissue from the insides of your intestines. Do-it-yourself diagnoses can make it much harder for a doctor to find the real problem. For those who truly suffer from celiac disease, a healthy life means not only no wheat, but also no barley or rye or foods made with them. That includes everything from beer to Worcestershire sauce!

Those grains are also some of our best sources of niacin and folate, two B vitamins. They're great sources of zinc and fiber, as well as providing some iron. Long-term diets without those vitamins and minerals can lead to anemia, pellagra (a skin condition), nervous system problems, small sex organs in men and a variety of other intestinal problems. Unless you know for sure that you have celiac disease, trying to eliminate just wheat can cause more harm than good.

There are too many weight loss diets available on the internet, in books or magazines to begin to mention here. Most have a tiny grain of truth to them. But most take that grain and turn it into a mountain of “don't eat this, never eat that, and only eat these” recommendations. Anyone can lose some weight eating an unbalanced diet, at least for a little while. The question is: How much else of your health are you willing to give up? Stick to a balanced diet, smaller portions of all food groups, and get your body

in motion with more exercise. You can lose some weight and keep your health too.

Here's an easy main dish salad for a cool summer dinner. Add a sprinkle of grated Parmesan cheese if you prefer more flavor. If you really want to cut down on the cooking, use a rotisserie chicken or even a large can of canned chicken.

Summer Pasta Salad with Chicken

1 ¾ cups dry whole wheat fusilli or penne pasta	2 Tbsp chopped fresh basil
8 oz (1 cup) cooked chicken, chopped	1 medium red bell pepper, chopped
2 medium tomatoes, seeded and chopped	2 cups steamed broccoli florets
2 green onions, chopped	1 clove garlic, minced
¼ cup chopped black olives	1 tsp Italian herbs
2 Tbsp chopped fresh parsley	½ avocado, pitted, peeled, diced
¼ cup light Italian salad dressing	pinch red pepper flakes if desired

Cook pasta according to directions on package. Drain and rinse with cold water. Mix all ingredients in large bowl except avocado and salad dressing. Drizzle salad dressing slowly over mixture and toss gently until pasta is well coated. Refrigerate until ready to serve. Add avocado and toss gently just before serving. Serves 4.