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**EAT RIGHT MONTANA**

*A coalition promoting healthy eating and active lifestyles*

April, 2006

Dear Colleagues:

Welcome to the third issue of Eat Right Montana's 2006 Healthy Families Campaign. This month, both the press release and physical activity handout focus have a walking emphasis. The health benefits of walking, pedometer walking and encouraging children to walk to school are some of the topics explored.

An interview with Cathy Costakis, MS, Physical Activity Coordinator of the Montana Nutrition and Physical Activity Program provides great insight into the concept of designing walkable communities and how the Safe Routes to School Program is one program working toward this end.

In our monthly Healthy Eating handout, we explore the nutritional benefits of incorporating lean meat, poultry and fish into a healthful diet. The *Eat Local* aspect of this topic is covered through ideas and strategies for purchasing locally produced meat.

As always, Eat Right Montana thanks the generous donors listed at the left. Through their support, the production of these monthly Healthy Families packets is possible. Eat Right Montana is a non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of healthful eating and active lifestyles. New members to this organization are always welcome and may contact one of the individuals listed below for membership information.

As always, your feedback is important to us; please let us know what you think. For a complete archive of past Healthy Families packets, go to:

[www.montanadieticassociation.org/promo.html](http://www.montanadieticassociation.org/promo.html)

Mary Hernandez, Chair: 406-252-5658 Rebekah Brown 406-994-2926 Crystelle Fogle: 406-947-2344 Mary Stein 406-994-5640

## Physical Activity



## Walking in Your Community

Consider life before the automobile. How did we get around? Walking was the primary mode of daily transportation. In fact, walking carries the prestigious title of "The Oldest and Most Basic Form of Transportation." Walking can connect us to our local communities while providing us with health-giving physical activity.

### The Benefits of Walking:

- It is affordable.
  - No gym fees, no expensive equipment – just you and your feet!
- Keeps you physically fit
  - Walking provides the combined benefit of enhanced cardiovascular health while keeping bones strong and managing weight.
- Keeps you mentally fit
  - Researchers at the University of Illinois found that research subjects who received aerobic training through walking had improved attention and memory.
- Provides an opportunity for socializing
  - Making a plan to meet a friend for a walk gets you out of the house, physically active and provides ample opportunity for catching up with friends.

### Is Your Community a Safe, Walkable Community?

Not all communities offer an environment that is safe for walkers. The Partnership for a Walkable America (PWA) is working hard to make changes in this area. PWA is a national coalition working to improve the conditions for walking in communities throughout America. Through their work, they hope to increase the number of Americans who walk regularly. See how walkable your community is... fill out the walkability checklist available at the PWA website:

<http://www.walkinginfo.org/pdf/walkingchecklist.pdf>



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## Physical Activity



### Walking or Biking to School: Why is it a good idea?

- Beneficial for kids' health.
  - Kids need physical activity to stay healthy. Walking to school can be a fun way of fitting in the necessary 60 minutes of recommended daily physical activity.
- Improves air quality and the environment.
  - Imagine the decreased automobile exhaust we would have if more people walked and fewer drove to school!
- Helps the community create safe walking and bicycle routes for all.
  - By urging more kids to walk to school, the community must address issues related to pedestrian safety such as sidewalk availability and traffic calming measures such as speed bumps.

### Pedometer Walking: A Great Way to Track Your Daily Activity

A pedometer is a little device worn on the waistband or belt that tracks steps taken. Tracking steps provides a realistic picture of how much daily activity you are getting and can give you a great starting point from which you can set personal goals for improvement.

Recent studies suggest that walking 10,000 steps a day is the appropriate level of activity for weight management and associated health benefits.

*Note: Most people only get between 900 – 2000 steps a day through normal living and working activity.*

To learn about pedometer walking programs, visit one of the following websites for details and motivational guidance:

Creative Walking, Inc – Pedometer Programs  
<http://www.creativewalking.com/pedometer-fm.html>

Shape Up America's 10,000 Steps Program  
<http://www.shapeup.org/10000steps.html>

## Healthy Eating

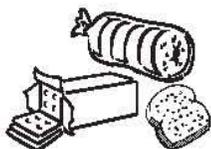
# Lean Meats as Part of A Healthful Food Plan

Lean meats, poultry, and fish can be important contributors to a tasty and healthful diet. Some of the key nutrients that are abundant in meat, poultry and fish are:

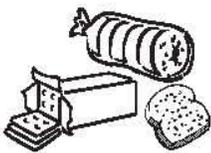
- **Protein** Protein builds and repairs body tissues. The amino acids that are the building blocks of protein are arranged in our bodies to make up the many structural and functional proteins that give us our human form and functions.
- **B-vitamins including** The various B-vitamins have many roles in the body, but all are central to keeping the energy pathways in our cells moving. Without the B-vitamins, our body can't properly utilize the energy we take in from carbohydrate, protein and fat.
  - thiamin
  - riboflavin
  - niacin
  - folic acid
  - vitamin B12
- **Iron** Iron helps to make the important blood molecule called hemoglobin. Hemoglobin carries oxygen to all of our body tissues, including our brains! Imagine, no iron – no oxygen – no thinking - not a good scene.
- **Zinc** This trace mineral is action packed! Not only does zinc have a role in many energy pathways in the cells of the body, it also helps to protect these cells against damage from damaging oxygen radicals.
- **Magnesium** This important mineral helps keep bones and teeth strong and healthy.

Preparation is key to maintaining healthful aspects of meat. Be sure to trim visible fat. Try baking, broiling, roasting or microwaving instead of frying, and drain off extra fat after cooking.

Cooking meats to appropriate temperatures is essential to ensure food safety. Visit the following website for guidelines for cooking meat safely: [www.fsis.usda.gov/thermy](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/thermy)



## Healthy Eating



## Locally Produced Meat

Many consumers are expressing a desire to purchase locally grown meat. The reasons for this growing interest are varied and include:

- A desire to support local farmers and ranchers
- A desire to purchase meat products that have not had to travel great distances
- A perception that the products are fresher or healthier.
- A taste preference for grass-fed meat
- A desire to support local, sustainable agricultural operations

The availability of these products in grocery stores, specialty stores and through direct marketing is increasing. However, the price of these locally grown meats tends to be significantly higher than other meat products. Below are some strategies for finding local meat products in your area.

- **Eat Well Guide** is a free, online directory of sustainably raised meat, poultry, dairy and eggs. Just plug in your zip code and you will receive information on where to purchase these products locally.  
<http://www.eatwellguide.org/>
- **Eat Wild** is an online sourcing for listing of pastured products in the US and Canada. You may find local pasture raised meat sources through their link:  
<http://www.eatwild.com/products/index.html>
- If you are looking for locally grown, organic products, try searching through the **Local Harvest** website at:  
<http://www.localharvest.org/>
- In Montana, the organization AERO (Alternative Energy Resources Organization) has put together a publication called **Abundant Montana**. This publication is a terrific resource for locating locally produced food products including meat. To obtain a copy of this publication, contact AERO at: <http://www.aeromt.org/>



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**EAT LOCAL, PLAY LOCAL, LIVE HEALTHY**  
Celebrating Healthy Families 2006

## **Designing Healthy Communities with Kids in Mind**

As a nation, we recently celebrated National Public Health Week (April 3-9) during which a great deal of attention was given to the link between community design (or the built environment) and children's well-being. According to George C. Benjamin, MD, FACP, executive director of the American Public Health Association, "Healthy communities for children are on the verge of being engineered out of existence, and we must take action to change these harmful built environments to ensure the well-being of our nation's kids."

So, what exactly is considered a healthy community? According to Cathy Costakis, MS, Physical Activity Coordinator for the Montana Nutrition and Physical Activity Program located at Montana State University, there are several factors that help to define the health of a community including "the ability to safely get around by walking or biking, access to healthy food, air quality, access to health care and minimal exposure to toxins."

"Over the past 50-60 years, we have forgotten how to design communities supportive of walking and biking for all ages and abilities," Costakis adds. "As a result we are seeing dire health consequences. Only half of children ages 12-19 get regular physical activity. The percentage of overweight kids has doubled since 1970. Kids are now showing risk factors for diseases that were previously only showing up in adults such as cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes."

Dan Burden, a nationally recognized authority designing healthy communities, has come up with a means for determining the health of a community called "The Popsicle Test." He claims that within a healthy, walkable community a child can walk to the store, buy a popsicle, and then carry that popsicle to their brother or sister at home before it melts. The key factors in play here are safe walkways and centralized retail and service industry.

The walkable communities that can pass this popsicle test tend to be the older, traditional neighborhoods that have grid-like streets, slow traffic speeds, tree-lined sidewalks and the corner store at the end of the block. People living in these communities tend to walk for reasons other than just recreation and, as a result, experience more activity in their day.

Newer communities are often designed around the automobile as the primary transportation mode. Hence, housing, schools and commercial centers are separated by significant distances, and traffic flow is a greater design priority than pedestrian flow.

The federal government has acknowledged the importance of supporting the walkability of communities by funding the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program in the last transportation bill. Safe Routes to School programs will provide funding to all states to improve infrastructure, fix hazards along school routes and educate communities on the benefits of walking or biking to school. Community design elements addressed by SRTS programs may include improvements such as installation of sidewalks and slowing traffic via stop signs or speed bumps.

The timing for the funding of SRTS programs coincides well with another effort geared to setting up healthier school environments for children. By the beginning of the next school year (2006-2007), all K-12 schools that participate in the federal School Nutrition Program must have a School Wellness Policy in place. Availability of healthy foods and opportunity for plenty of physical activity are both important requirements of this mandated wellness policy.

When starting to assess the health of your community, particularly where walking to school is concerned, Costakis recommends doing a walking audit. "A walking audit will help to identify specific issues or problems within the routes to your school." A great resource designed to help in conducting a walking audit is "The Walkability Checklist" which may be found at <http://www.walkinginfo.org/pdf/walkingchecklist.pdf>

"We have been advocating the importance of walking for good health, but we have been designing our communities so that this is difficult to do. We need to make it easy and safe for people to walk in their communities as part of their normal daily routines," Costakis concluded.

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