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EAT RIGHT MONTANA

A coalition promoting healthy eating and active lifestyles

May, 2006

Dear Colleagues:

Welcome to the fourth issue of Eat Right Montana's 2006 Healthy Families Campaign. This month, as we welcome spring in the Northern Rockies, we will explore cycling as a fun way to explore our local communities and gardening as a means of increasing access to locally grown, fresh, delicious food.

The press release highlights an interview with Cheryl Moore-Gough, Montana State University Extension Horticulture Specialist. Cheryl shares her years of experience and enthusiasm for gardening while providing basic pointers for those of us who are novice green thumbs.

The two handouts are filled with pointers and suggestions. The "Play Local" handout will guide you in choosing the bike that is right for you, the importance of helmets in bicycle safety and why hydration will make your biking experience more enjoyable. The "Eat Local" handout highlights the many benefits of growing your own food and provides specific assistance with challenges in overcoming the challenges that face gardeners in northern climates.

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.

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

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Physical Activity

Cycling in Big Sky Country

Most of us were introduced to bicycling as kids. Why not rekindle your relationship with an old sport and explore your local community through cycling? Cycling is an enjoyable (and gasoline free!) form of transportation as well as recreation which provides terrific health benefits.



Health Benefits of Cycling

- **Improve your fitness** Strength, stamina, aerobic fitness and muscle function all improve with regular cycling.
- **Maintain a healthy weight** Cycling provides a wonderful avenue for physical activity.
- **Lower your risk of heart disease** Cycling helps strengthen your heart muscle. People who get regular physical activity have a decreased risk for heart disease.
- **Reduce your stress** Physical activity helps to reduce anxiety, stress and depression. Plus, cycling on a beautiful day is pure pleasure!

Cycling Safely

A basic cycling safety rule is to wear a helmet every time you bike. The helmet must fit correctly in order to work effectively. Here are some helmet pointers:

- The helmet shouldn't move when you move your head from side to side. Comfort is important too.
- Take the "two fingers test." Your helmet should fit so that you have room for two fingers between your eyebrows and the lower edge of the helmet. If the helmet is tilting way back on your forehead – that part of your head is not protected.
- Buckle the helmet straps and make sure the straps are not too loose, nor too tight. One finger should slip comfortably under the strap against your neck.
- Try on several helmets in the store until you find the fit that is best for you. Pads and straps are often included to help achieve that custom fit!

Hydrate for Health and Performance

Proper hydration is critical when cycling, especially during the hot summer months. Without adequate hydration, your performance can suffer, body temperature can increase, heart rate can increase and your enjoyment can suffer. Try these simple suggestions to ensure that you stay hydrated and set yourself up for success:

- **Before the ride:** Two hours before your ride, drink two 8-oz glasses of water and then have a bit more just before your ride. If you are riding first thing in the morning, be sure to go to bed well hydrated.
- **During the ride:** Throughout your ride, you should drink water every 15 minutes or so. Keep in mind, the harder you are riding, the more you need to hydrate.
- **After the ride:** To finish off your proper hydration plan, don't forget to continue to hydrate in the hour after you complete your ride. Drink another two 8-oz glasses of water in that first hour.

Physical Activity

Dressing for Comfortable Cycling

Proper clothing can make or break your cycling experience. **Layering is the key** – that way, when the weather changes drastically half-way through your ride, you are ready for anything. Here are some layering tips:

- **First Layer:** Wear a material that has wicking characteristics (cotton is a no-no). You don't want moisture held against your skin.
- **Second Layer:** This is your insulating layer, and the thickness of this layer should depend on the temperature. Fleece is a good option here.
- **Third Layer:** This is your windproof layer and some folks may want this to be waterproof as well. Goretex® is both windproof and waterproof.

Choosing a Bike

There are so many different types of bikes that choosing the proper one for your needs can be daunting. Talk with friends who bike to glean information from them. Then, before you head to the bike store, answer the following questions on a piece of paper. Bring your answers to the bike store, and the professionals there will have the proper information to help you select the bike that is right for you!

- **Why do I want to bike?** Some possible reasons are transportation to school or work, just to have fun on sidewalks and bike paths, to get out in the mountains and rugged trails, to do stunts and tricks or to race.
- **Where should I buy my bike?** Certainly, the information and selection you find at a bike shop is superior to that at discount stores or toy stores. But price is an important consideration too. If you are looking to not spend much money, consider buying a used bike at a garage sale or used sporting goods store.
- **What types of bikes are available?** Mountain bikes, road bikes, hybrid bikes, tandem bikes, racing bikes, BMX bikes... Explore the many types of bikes at the following website:

<http://library.thinkquest.org/J002670/indexofbikes.htm>

Great resources to help you get started cycling safely include:

- **BicycleSafe.com:** <http://www.bicyclesafe.com/>
- **Bike Helmet Safety Institute:** <http://www.bhsi.org/>
- **Pedestrian and Bicycling Info Center:** <http://www.bicyclinginfo.org/>



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Healthy Eating

Grow Your Own Food *Gardening for Health*

Looking for a strategy to eat more locally grown food? Here is one... **grow your own!** Yes, gardening can bring delicious, nutritious and fresh local food right to your own doorstep.

Gardening is a great way to support healthy eating by providing:

- A bounty of readily available fresh fruits and vegetables.
- The freshest food possible – is there anything more fresh than just-picked fruit or vegetable from the garden?
- Opportunity and incentive to try unfamiliar fruits or vegetables.
- A great learning opportunity for preparing foods from scratch. A bumper crop of zucchini brings out the most creative of recipes and leads to improved culinary skills for children and adults alike.

The benefits of growing your own food are many.

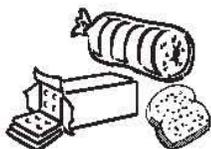
- Provides a source of fresh, delicious and nutritious food.
- Allows the food dollar to stretch.
- Provides a means for getting more physical activity.
- Brings the whole family together with a common purpose.
- Reduces stress and brings a sense of accomplishment.
- Gives a connection to, and appreciation of, food.

Gardening tips for the beginning gardener

- Find a mentor in your area. A person with gardening experience in your specific microclimate is a valuable resource.
- Start small! One of the most common mistakes is to try to plant a large garden as you are learning about gardening. Try a smaller space (no larger 4 feet by 12 feet) your first year.
- Select a garden spot that gets at least 8-10 hours of sunlight per day.
- Prepare your soil for success. Test your soil (via soil test kits available at most hardware or gardening stores) for nutrients and pH. You may need to add fertilizer, such as composted manure, and peat moss to the soil.
- Choose crops that grow well in your geographical region. You may want to check with your Extension Specialist (horticulture) for the best crops for your region. Some basic crops that tend to do well even in northern growing conditions are green beans, onions, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots and snap peas.
- Be patient. Keep in mind that this is your first year at trying your green thumb. You will learn a lot and undoubtedly have some bounty to enjoy.

For additional tips for gardening success in northern climates, please visit the Montana State University Extension Garden Guide Website:

<http://gardenguide.montana.edu/>



Healthy Eating



Children benefit in many ways from gardening

Given the opportunity, children are naturals in the garden. They are curious, love to dig in the dirt and learn by doing. Some of the basic skills gardening brings to children include:

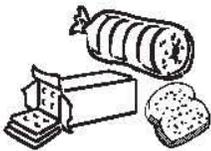
- **Nutrition** Through gardening, children try fresh, delicious fruits and vegetables while learning about the sources of these foods.
- **Responsibility** Gardening involves caring for and tending plants – the consequences of not doing so are visibly clear.
- **Self confidence** Harvesting vegetables grown through their own efforts gives kids a great sense of achievement and enjoyment; especially when they get to eat the fruits of their labor!
- **Connection to the source of their food** Gardening provides a wonderful opportunity to teach kids about being good stewards of the land and appreciating the food they eat.
- **Physical activity** Gardening is active, fun and productive.

Tips for gardening with kids

- Get dirty! Dirt and gardening go hand-in-hand.
- Show, don't tell. Always choose a demonstration or pictures above a lecture. For example, have the children help till the soil, plant the seeds and water the growing crops.
- Plant some items that will grow fast (radishes). Instant, or close to instant, gratification is a great way to hook them.
- Based upon the age of the child (children), consider their attention span – for little ones, create many, short tasks to keep them involved.

Links to resources for gardening with children

- The National Gardening Association has established a program called Kids Gardening. Many resources and ideas for working on gardening projects with children may be found at <http://www.kidsgardening.com/>.
- Gardening with Children: Ohio Master Gardener Resource Guide: <http://www.hcs.ohio-state.edu/mg/gardeningwithkids.html>
- Growing in the Garden K-3 Resources from Iowa State University



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

Gardening for Health and Well-Being

The art of gardening and growing your own food is one that enriches the lives of those who take part in it. By growing your own food, you can reap the benefits of fresh, flavorful and nutritious food, enhanced physical activity and exposure to an activity that has been shown to reduce stress and have therapeutic mental health benefits.

Cheryl Moore-Gough, Extension Horticulture Specialist at Montana State University-Bozeman, advocates gardening as part of a healthy lifestyle for the entire family. "In having a garden, you are imparting a healthier lifestyle to your children...fresh air, time spent outside, sunshine, exercise and fresh nutritious food plucked at its peak of freshness. Children who are included in gardening are getting a good first impression of healthy food and are gaining a real understanding of where their food comes from," Moore-Gough stated.

Current research from the United States Department of Agriculture shows that 75% of children are not eating the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables for good health. And, children living in families with limited resources are even more vulnerable to poor nutritional intake. Gardening is a means for families to stretch their food dollar while increasing access to an abundance of fresh, tasty produce.

However, starting a garden can be a daunting task for many. "The most important thing I tell a novice gardener is to find someone in your neighborhood who has been gardening and ask them what works and what does not work...there are many microclimates even within a small region, so gaining from the knowledge of an experienced gardener in your region is very valuable," Moore-Gough suggested. "In addition to this, I tell folks to keep a journal – observe what is happening in the garden, have your soil tested so you have information about the nutrient content and pH of your soil [Note: Soil test kits are available at many hardware stores], consider your water source, don't plant too much and be sure your garden location gets a minimum of 8-10 hours of sun each day."

Of course, there will be ups and downs for the new gardener, Moore-Gough acknowledges. But experience will help to iron out these problems, and she assures people that gardening in northern climates, with limited growing seasons, is very doable. In the end, the benefits far outweigh the frustrations. "There is nothing quite as satisfying as seeing the light in your child's eye when they eat a snap pea they have just picked off of the vine and realize how sweet and delicious it is ...and they helped grow it!"

For more information on gardening in northern climates, visit the Montana State University – Extension Service Garden Guide website at: <http://gardenguide.montana.edu/>