

Get Healthy – Read the Label!

Today, 1 out of every 3 children is overweight or obese. This issue is affecting kids' energy level, ability to participate in sports, their concentration, their self esteem and most importantly, their health. A very sobering statistic is that every year, over 1,000 children in the U.S. under the age of 12 have a major stroke due to cardiovascular issues that used to plague only adults! We can do something about that by becoming very aware of what's in our foods, and choosing more health building foods and monitoring portion sizes.

Knowing how to read and interpret food labels is important because as an informed consumer you have the power to choose wisely. Commercial food companies add a lot of things when they process the canned, frozen and packaged foods that we buy. The best approach is to buy as much unprocessed, whole, fresh, food as possible. But when you do buy any commercially processed food, here are some tips that will help you make wise choices.

Be aware of the number of servings in a container. How much of that container would you eat at one meal or snack and call a serving? If the package says there are 2 servings per container but you eat the whole package yourself remember you would have to double the calories to know how much you are eating. If a jar of mayonnaise says 1 Tablespoon is a serving but you always put 1 tablespoon on each slice of bread of a sandwich (1 on the top slice and 1 on the bottom slice of bread) you are doubling the calories just from the mayonnaise.

Be aware of the number of calories in each serving. Added sugars and fat that you aren't aware of can add many unwanted calories.

Learn how to practice portion control. Today, people eat much larger portions than we did even 20 years ago. It may take some time to retrain yourself to eat smaller portions, but there are ways you can estimate how large a portion size is using simple everyday comparisons, Here are some examples:

- 1 Cup = A tennis ball or a woman's fist
- ½ Cup = A regular size cup cake paper, or a woman's cupped hand
- ¼ Cup = A large egg
- 2 Tbsp = A ping pong ball or golf ball
- 1 Tbsp = a woman's thumb to the first joint
- 1 tsp = One dice, or a woman's thumb

I'll be contributing some thoughts about healthy eating, and I invite you, the reader to submit your questions which I'll be glad to discuss in future issues of the newsletter. What do you see as your biggest stumbling blocks in the area of healthy eating for yourselves and for your family? Do you want help with menus for main meals? Do you need help with economical food ideas? Are you happy with your meals or bored with them? Looking for new approaches? Send in your questions and thoughts and let's talk! You can reach me at info@hmresources.org.

Pat Kaiser is a registered dietitian with many years experience in the food industry. She and her husband Jim have 6 grown children. Pat lives in South Bend, IN. (this is a sample: Pat is sending her bio tomorrow morning)