



Recipe for Success

You've made it through the holidays and now want to get back on track. January is the time of year when you hear all of the claims of "quick fixes" for weight loss or getting back into shape. Do they really work? How do you separate fact from fiction?

Now is the time to invest in your health. Stop choosing food for the number of calories, grams of fat or "carbs." Instead think about what it gives you in return. For example, 100-calorie pack of cookies may be only 100 calories, but are you getting any vitamins or minerals?

Better to have a piece of fruit and a low fat cheese stick, about the same calories, but you get calcium for your bones, fiber for a healthy GI

tract, and many vitamins and minerals needed to keep your body running. The Food Guide Pyramid found at www.mypyramid.gov is designed to encourage a variety of food choices and give accurate information about why, what, how much of each you should eat. Something to keep in mind as you make choices, ask yourself, what food group does this come from? If you can't decide, should you buy it or eat it?

- Focus on whole foods and REAL foods -- always a better use of your calories than something pre-packaged that you can't identify.
- Does it make sense? What is fat-free margarine? If margarine is made from Vegetable oil (fat), how can it be a fat-free FAT? The portion size, usually a tablespoon for butter/margarine, is changed to a teaspoon and the first ingredient is water.
- Look at PORTION sizes. In this world where everything is "super sized," it is hard to tell what an actual serving size would be. You may be surprised that the pint of ice cream has 4 servings according to the label. The information on the label is based on the serving size, if you eat more, then you have to do the math.
- Substitute, don't add. Every day there are new studies about the benefits of different diets, supplements, or foods. However keep in mind you can't add it to a poor diet and expect a change. For example, nuts may help decrease your risk for heart disease, but only if you eat them INSTEAD of other high saturated fat items in the "meat" group and eat only a serving.
- Does your recipe meet the CT schools' "Healthy Snack Guidelines"? The guidelines state: "No more than 15 grams of added sugar or 7 grams of fat/ per serving." Translation: 4 grams of sugar = 1 teaspoon, 7 gm fat = 1 ½ teaspoons. A recipe with 24 servings can have up to 1 cup of added sugar and ¾ cup of added fat and meet the standards. To modify your recipes consider substituting applesauce for some of the "FAT," decreasing the amount of sugar, and adding dried fruit or fruit juice as sweeteners.
- Cook in bulk and freeze what you don't need right away. You control what goes into the recipe and how nice to have a meal ready on a busy night.

Remember the best way to get your children to eat well is to be a good example. As a parent, you provide the food and then it's up to the child to eat it. If only healthy choices are presented, that's what they will eat. Want to learn more? Come to one of the "Building Healthy Family" sessions January-April. Details are on the www.cantonschools.org website.