



Brought to you by the UMass Extension Nutrition Education Program

ISSUE 36

Nutrition Bites is a newsletter that highlights helpful information on staying safe, staying healthy, an easy and nutritious recipe to try with your family, physical activity ideas, gardening tips, and food access resources in Massachusetts. We know you are taking extra steps to keep you and your family safe during this pandemic. Our goal is to work together to provide information to help our community maintain the safety of us all.

STAYING HEALTHY



Discover the health benefits of eating meals at home with family.

Eating meals at home helps us eat more fruits and vegetables, improves our ability to stick to healthy diet changes, and helps us maintain a healthy weight. Leading by example at home will build healthy eating habits in our children. They are more likely to try new foods when adults serve as a role model and eat with them, too. Here are some tips to eat family meals:

- Plan 1 or 2 meals each week when your family will all eat together.
- Plan your meals before going to the grocery store, make a list of ingredients, and stick to the list.
- Give kids choices when planning meals by letting them choose a fruit or vegetable. Try new foods as a family.
- Show kids how to stir, scoop, mix, or chop ingredients. Remember to supervise kids in the kitchen.
- Start weekly dinner routines, like Meatless Mondays, Taco Tuesdays, or New Food Fridays.

RECIPES AND NUTRITION TIPS



Enjoy summer vegetables and try our Garden Ratatouille recipe.

Get your whole family involved! Ask your children to select different squashes or colored peppers they want in the dish. Children are more likely to eat vegetables they helped pick out at the store or farmers' market. Children also like to help in the kitchen with washing and preparing ingredients. To boost nutritional values, add a low-fat protein such as fish, chicken, or tofu. Also pair this dish with a whole grain like brown rice, whole-wheat pasta, or whole-grain couscous. Learn how the University of Maine makes its ratatouille recipe at <https://extension.umaine.edu/food-health/efnep/recipe-video-series/#ratatouille>.

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PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TIPS



Try some family activities this month.

Throughout the year, family time and physical activity are important. Living in New England, each season presents different opportunities to do both activities together. Summer days are ideal for outdoor activity because they are longer and warmer. As we approach the end of summer, let us explore some ways to enjoy family time as we take in the extra daylight. Here are a few ideas:

- Turn your backyard or a local park into an obstacle course.
- On a hot day, buy balloons and fill them with water. Toss the balloons back and forth until they burst for a fun way to cool down.
- Look into local community gardens and volunteer together.

Can you think of any ideas you would like to try before the end of the summer?

GARDENING TIPS



Save your plant seeds.

“Seed saving” is saving seeds out of plants that grew in the garden to use in the next growing season. This is a great way to save money on annual plants. Annual plants such as lettuce, tomatoes, and peppers die in a single growing season, and you will need to replant each year. Here are steps to save your seeds.

Begin harvesting seeds with flowers and fruits that are dry when mature. To dry the seeds, start by placing the seeds in a ceramic or glass dish. Then set them in a cool, shaded spot. When the seeds are hard, store them in paper envelopes and include a label that specifies the crop and date of harvest.

When harvesting wet-seeded plants, such as tomatoes or squash, collect seeds when the fruit is overly ripe. Remove the seeds from the fruit and rinse them off before drying them.

Visit University of Maine Extension’s website for more information at <https://extension.umaine.edu/publications/2750e/>.

FOOD ACCESS RESOURCES IN MASSACHUSETTS



Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) online purchasing options expanded in Massachusetts.

Massachusetts residents who receive SNAP can now use their electronic benefit transfer (EBT) SNAP benefits to buy fresh food and pantry staples online from a variety of participating stores for same-day delivery and pickup via Instacart, including Price Chopper, ALDI, and newly added Hannaford and Stop & Shop. Walmart and Amazon are also federally approved SNAP online retailers in the state. Residents can check their SNAP eligibility and apply online at <https://dtaconnect.eohhs.mass.gov/> or over the phone at (877) 382-2363.