

Below are some easy but useful ideas and tips to improve your health and family life from EFNEP, the Expanded Food, Nutrition, and Exercise Program

This year the holidays will be about making new traditions. Focus on spending quality time with the loved ones in your household. Eating, exercising, and playing together isn't just important for healthy relationships, it also helps us stay physically healthy!

Eating together helps us slow down and be more mindful of our food, exercising with others pushes us to be more active for longer, and involving our kids in our health journey teaches them to eat smart and move more!

Planning your holiday menu in advance can do wonders for your budget!

SNAP's More in My Basket program recommends buying shelf-stable and frozen (or freezable) items as early as you can.

For more tips and examples of shelf-stable and frozen holiday ingredients, [check out SNAP's blog post!](#)

December is Food Service Safety Month. The focus of this month is safety in food service, but it's just as important to handle our food safely at home!

This month, remind your family of the 4 steps to safe food preparation: Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill.

Brussels sprouts get a bad rap thanks to their bitter taste, but this winter vegetable can actually have a nutty sweetness when cooked properly! Instead of boiling Brussels sprout, season them with your favorite spices and roast or sauté in a little bit of olive oil until tender.

Roasted, boiled, stir fried, or raw, carrots are a great option for almost any time!

I especially love eating raw carrots as a snack, because they are sweet and crunchy which satisfies my sweet tooth and helps me feel full. Carrots are also an excellent source of Vitamin A, which is important in keeping our vision, immune system, and organs running well. Best of all, carrots are in season this month!

Holiday meals can be festive and healthy! Check out [this great handout](#) for some easy swaps that will make your plate healthier without losing any of its holiday cheer.

Decorating gingerbread houses is a fun holiday activity. This year, try decorating your cookie house with healthier snacks like raisins, cranberries, pretzels, nuts, seeds, and fruit slices!

This is a great way to introduce kids to healthy sweets, especially since it's so tempting to munch on the decorations while doing this activity!

Gluten is everywhere--flour, bread, pasta, beer, cereal, crackers, and sweets--and the number of people who are sensitive to gluten is growing.

For Gluten-Free Baking Week, we challenge you to get creative and try baking a dessert, bread, or casserole with gluten-free substitutes, or one that doesn't have any gluten to begin with!

Teaching your kids to manage money will help them stay on budget when they are older. Follow these tips to help your kids get familiar with handling finances:

-Let little kids pay for things with cash. The physical exchange helps them understand the value of money.

-When on vacations or outings, give older kids a set amount of cash at the beginning of the trip. They will have to plan ahead and stay on budget so they don't run out!

-Don't make tight budgets a big deal, but do explain them simply to your kids. For example, "We have a set amount of money for groceries, and we have to make sure we buy things we need before buying things we want."

Don't be afraid to talk about money around your kids. The more they hear you talking about what you do to manage your finances, the more comfortable they will be handling money wisely in the future!

2021 is just around the corner! Take some time today to think about the ways you have worked toward a healthier lifestyle this year.

**EFNEP wishes you a happy and healthy holiday!**