



Growing Together: Food, Family and Friends

Julie Garden-Robinson, Ph.D., R.D., L.R.D., Food and Nutrition Specialist
Susan Quamme Wehlander, M.Ed., Child Development Specialist

This month, in recognition of American Heart Month and Valentine's Day, we feature a chocolatey recipe, tips on heart health, parenting tips for loving connections and budget-friendly ways to eat healthfully.



fcafotodigital_istock.com

EAT

Take Care of Your Heart

About how many times does your heart beat per day? On average, our heart beats about 100,000 times per day. Show some love to your heart by nourishing it with healthful food and plenty of physical activity.

Most children and adults do not consume enough fruits and vegetables or whole grains, which are heart-healthy foods. On average, children and adults need 4 to 5 cups, in total, of fruits and vegetables, and they do get enough physical activity. Adults should aim for 30 minutes on most days of the week, while children need 60 minutes daily.

- Set a heart-healthy goal. See www.ag.ndsu.edu/food and search for “nourish” to learn more about taking care of your heart and the rest of your body.
- Visit www.choosemyplate.gov to learn more about food needs for different ages and stages.

This recipe is healthier than chocolate candy with its fiber-containing oatmeal, protein-rich peanut butter and antioxidant-rich cocoa powder. Children can help measure the ingredients and scoop the cookies. Teens, with a little supervision, could make the recipe by themselves. For nut allergies, substitute soy-based or sunflower seed butter. To trim the calorie content per serving, make the cookies small!

No-bake Chocolate Oatmeal Cookies

- 2 cups white sugar
- 1 stick (1/2 cup) butter or margarine
- 1/2 cup milk
- 3 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 pinch salt
- 3 cups quick oats
- 1/2 cup peanut butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Bring sugar, butter or margarine, milk, cocoa and salt to a rolling boil for 2 minutes. Add oats, peanut butter and vanilla and mix. Immediately begin scooping onto waxed paper. Allow to cool then store in an air-tight container.

Makes 24 servings. Each cookie has 173 calories, 7 grams (g) fat, 3 g protein, 2 g fiber and 71 milligrams sodium.



iuliana_istock.com

Connect

Love is in the air!

Is your home filled with love and harmony? Sure, sometimes it is — but let's be honest: there might also be yelling, fighting and power struggles. That's just a reality for many families.



Jacob Wackerhausen_istock.com

If you'd like to decrease those stressful moments and build stronger connections with your child, focusing on *positive parenting practices* can make all the difference. Here are some simple ideas to try this week:

Ideas for Creating Loving Connections

■ Be kind and firm

Acknowledge your child's feelings while setting clear boundaries. Try this technique that doesn't disregard the child's feelings yet remains firm, by substituting "and" for "but." For example:

- ◆ "You need to spend time with your friends, and our family works together to clean up the dinner dishes."
- ◆ "I understand you want to drive the car to school today, and it's needed for the dentist appointments."

■ Show love by giving your time

- ◆ Put your phone down and really listen to how their day went.
- ◆ Use bedtime as an opportunity to connect and talk.
- ◆ Greet them with a big smile when they walk in the door — let them know you're happy to see them!
- ◆ Hug your child and say "I love you" often.

Savor the Savings

We have all noticed increases in food prices at grocery stores during the past several years. Heart-healthy food is not necessarily expensive. For example, dry beans, oatmeal and rice are budget-friendly, versatile ingredients. Frozen, canned, fresh and dried fruits and vegetables all count toward the total recommendation. Choose budget-friendly protein sources, including frozen, canned and fresh. Visit www.ag.ndsu.edu/food and click on "Food Preparation" to learn how to pinch pennies in the kitchen.

Want to learn more? Join a free class and discover how to transform your family dynamics! www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension/programs/parent-education

■ Cool down before problem-solving

Allow both you and your child to calm down before tackling an issue together. Some great ways to cool off include:

- ◆ Deep breathing
- ◆ Doing repetitive activities like chewing gum, swinging, drinking from a straw or shooting hoops
- ◆ Listening to music or go for a walk

Small, simple steps can help foster love and harmony at home. Inspired by *Positive Discipline* principles by Jane Nelsen, these tools focus on building respectful and loving relationships within families.

February 2025

Get this newsletter in your email **every** month. Subscribe at www.ag.ndsu.edu/food

County commissions, North Dakota State University and U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. NDSU does not discriminate in its programs and activities on the basis of age, color, gender expression/identity, genetic information, marital status, national origin, participation in lawful off-campus activity, physical or mental disability, pregnancy, public assistance status, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, spousal relationship to current employee, or veteran status, as applicable. Direct inquiries to Vice Provost, Title IX/ADA Coordinator, Old Main 100, 701-231-7708, ndsu.eoaa@ndsu.edu. This publication will be made available in alternative formats for people with disabilities upon request, 701-231-7881.