



STRENGTHENING OKLAHOMA FAMILIES Family and Consumer Science News

Parents/caregivers as agents of change for children’s diets

When rushing around, living life day to day, parents and caregivers may not give a lot of thought to how much influence they have over the foods children eat now – and in the future.

“This extends beyond merely choosing and serving their food or talking to them about the foods they are consuming,” said Ashlea Braun, OSU Extension nutrition specialist and assistant professor in the Department of Nutritional Sciences. “Humans learn in social contexts, meaning we learn from observing others. Research shows that the quality of a child’s diet is related to the diet quality of their caregivers.”

Does the diet of the parent/caregiver adhere to the United States Dietary Guidelines and include adequate amounts of fruits and vegetables? If not, then the child’s may not. Or, are the adults intentionally modeling healthy eating?

“Modeling healthy eating includes behaviors such as intentionally trying to eat healthy food in front of children or displaying excitement about eating healthy foods,” she said. “Research has shown for years that having family meals together can influence the diet of children. However, it’s not just eating together, but what you’re eating together as a family, and children observing their caregivers making healthy choices.”

Modeling these behaviors in front of children can help build their confidence to eat healthier while shaping norms about eating. In addition, children like to have autonomy – they like to make their own decisions. By encouraging children to eat healthier foods via social cues and modeling,

parents/caregivers can encourage such choices while honoring autonomy.

Braun said this is a better approach than trying to get children to eat foods via force. In fact, research indicates this can create a great deal of tension between families at mealtime.

In addition to the concept of modeling via observation, if parents/caregivers adopt higher-quality eating patterns, they’re more likely to have higher quality foods present in the home. In turn, this makes children more familiar with these healthier choices, leading children to consume those foods both in and out of the home.

Some research takes it even further, examining the presence and/or absence of traditional healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables and those considered less healthy, such as foods rich in added sugars.

“Unfortunately, our desire to consume those less-than-healthy choices can be powerful given those foods are generally very appealing and palatable,” Braun said. “Having those foods present in excess can overpower our potential desire or intention to consume healthier choices. Social and environmental cues are important, and some research suggests these cues can be more impactful than merely setting rules about eating ‘healthy’ and ‘unhealthy’ foods.”

The effects hold true for both younger and older children and can be particularly important as older children are exposed to more and more external food environments that can shape their eating, including restaurants, ads on television, and other social influences.



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In this issue

- Parents/caregivers as agents of change for children’s diets
- May is Mental Health Awareness Month
- OHCE week
- County Association meeting report
- State Conference
- OHCE calendar

May is Mental Health Awareness Month

The spring season is in full swing, bringing proms, graduations and other celebrations. It's also a time to focus on mental health since May is Mental Health Awareness Month. Rachel Morse, Oklahoma State University Extension's youth mental health specialist with the Oklahoma 4-H Youth Development program, said now is a time for mental health awareness organizations and nonprofits to address child and adolescent mental health problems and look for ways to reduce the stigma often associated with mental health.

"Young people today have a lot of stressors in their lives. They often turn to parents, friends and other trusted adults for guidance on reducing anxiety and feeling whole," Morse said. "Conversations around mental health can be held at any age and there are numerous mindfulness practices that promote conversation, awareness and reduce stress."

So, what is mindfulness? It's the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where you are and what you're doing, and not being overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around you. Morse said mindfulness is a quality of what every human being already possesses – you just have to learn how to access it.

"Mindfulness activities can include a lot of different things, including meditation, yoga, creating a glitter jar, taking a walk through the neighborhood or even doing something creative like crafting or coloring," she said. To help bring understanding to mindfulness, Morse suggest going on a five senses scavenger hunt. To start, recall what the five senses are – sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. Using your senses, look for the following things:



- Something that makes a crunch sound
- Something that tastes sour
- Something that smells good
- Something that is smooth
- Find three of the same things
- Something that smells bad
- Something that has a sweet taste
- Something loud
- Something long
- Something soft
- Something colorful
- Something quiet
- Something rough

This activity can be done alone or in a group and can be done inside or outdoors. Once this activity is complete, take time to notice how you feel afterwards. Are you more relaxed? Become aware of your breathing and how your body feels. Was it easy or hard to focus on looking for the items on the list?

"An important part of mental health awareness is knowing there is support, resources and people to help you through your hard times, no matter your age," Morse said. "Oklahoma features statewide hotlines for those seeking help and treatment."

Reachout Helpline: 800-522-9054 This program is through the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health.

Youth Crisis Mobile Response: 833-885-CARE (2273) This response line is for people under the age of 24 in behavioral, emotional, physical, social or school crisis and available 24 hours per day.

"Remember, mental health IS health and taking care of yourself is a priority," Morse said.

Dewey County OHCE

OHCE Week May 1-7, 2022



During OHCE week, Camargo OHCE will be providing an OHCE display including fresh homemade cookies at the convenience store in Camargo.

Each day during the week SCH will spotlight the accomplishments of a woman who exemplifies the OHCE creed and purposes in our community. They will also hold the annual dinner for graduating senior girls and their mothers.

Members of Fun Times OHCE will be exercising as a group at the senior center on Tuesday and Friday morning. They invite members of the community to join their group.

Reminder: If your club is submitting an OHCE week report it need to be in the extension office by May 23rd. Include a one-page report of your activities, up to 9 pictures, and copies of newspaper articles or screen shots of social media posts.



Dewey County OHCE Spring Association Meeting

The county spring meeting was held on May 1st. Camargo OHCE hosted the meeting at their beautifully decorated community center. President, Sue Smith presided over the meeting. After a prayer by Carlotta England, everyone enjoyed the delicious food provided by Camargo OHCE.

Attendance included 10 Camargo members, 6 Fun Times members, 6 SCH members, 1 Extension Educator, and 1 guest. Members that attended the district meeting reported on the workshops they attended.

Brandy Jones, district representative, reported on the district meeting evaluations and the state meeting plans. Jean Bailey, extension educator, reported on hosting the district meeting, Farm Safety Day Camp, and the Reach out with Make and Take workshop grant.

The county fair was discussed. It was decided to have another quilt block challenge this year. Elizabeth Jones ; SCH club will serve as chair and select the main fabric. Each club will select a fair booth theme and submit their selections to the extension office. The kitchen committee will schedule a meeting to finalize plans for the concession stand.

In other business, the county OHCE organization will award scholarships to two graduating seniors this year.

2022 State Meeting - 87th Annual OHCE State Conference

July 10-12, 2022

The meeting will be held at the Champion Convention Center in Oklahoma City. Rooms will be available at the Hilton Garden INN for July 10th and 11th.

Mark you calendars now, begin putting some money aside and make plans to join the train at the annual state OHCE meeting. Have a great time with old friends and make new friends.





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Dewey Co. OHCE CALENDAR - -

May Lesson: Best practices to reduce food waste

- May 1 County OHCE meeting
- May 1-7 OHCE week
- May 5 Camargo meeting
- May 10 SCH meeting & sr. dinner

June Lesson: Protein Balls

- June 1 OHCE week reports due
- June 2 Camargo meeting

Looking ahead:

- July 10-12 State OHCE meeting - OKC

Fun Times OHCE meets at 9:00 A.M. on Tuesday and Fridays at the senior center in Seiling.

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www.OHCE.okstate.edu

Reducing Food Waste at Home: Easy Every-Day Tips

- Sara Elnakib, PhD, MPH, RDN, Family & Community Health Sciences Educator, Cooperative Extension of Passaic County
 - Jennifer Shukaitis, MPH, Family & Community Health Sciences Educator
- Amy Rowe, County Agent II, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Cooperative Extension of Essex and Passaic Counties

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates that about 30–40% of food is thrown out in the U.S., equating to 63 million tons and \$218 billion of food wasted annually. Food waste in America has been increasing at an alarming rate with a 50% increase in food waste since the 1970s. Additionally, American consumers waste more than other consumers around the world; for example, Americans waste ten times more food than their South Asian counterparts.

Food waste occurs in every part of the food system, from food that is wasted at harvest to food that we throw away at home. According to the USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS), most of the food that is wasted happens at the consumer level. The ERS estimates that in 2010 consumer waste accounted for 31% of total waste, which was approximately 133 billion pounds of food and a value of \$162 billion. Consumers waste food when they improperly store food, cook more than needed and throw out the extras, or acquire more food than they need. Learning ways to decrease food waste at home can be the first step towards making a positive environmental impact.

Meal Planning

Planning out meals can save food waste and money. The average U.S. household throws out one in every four bags of groceries costing \$1,866 per year. By planning meals in advance, individuals and families can have a much better idea of the quantities of food they will need for a specific period of time. By eating all the food you buy, you save money that may have been spent on food bought on impulse that ends up going to waste.

Shopping

1. BEFORE you go shopping, "shop" in your own kitchen so you can plan meals around what you currently have and avoid buying food duplicates. Make your shopping list based on your current "inventory."
2. Make a list and stick to it! In addition to reducing food waste, this can save time and money by eliminating browsing and impulse purchasing.
3. Include amounts on your shopping list to make sure you buy just what you need. This is particularly relevant for fresh ingredients, such as meat and produce. For example: *apples—enough for kids' school lunches for three days.*
4. Be realistic about your lifestyle and make your shopping list based on how many meals you plan to eat at home. Consider how often you plan to eat out or order in each week.
5. Consider timing. Only shop for the food you plan to eat until your next shopping trip, whether that will be in two days or two weeks.
6. Beware marketing ploys that persuade you to buy large quantities. Although "10 potatoes for \$10" may sound like a great deal, if you eat only three potatoes and throw away seven, that is still money and food wasted.
7. Fresh foods tend to spoil more quickly than packaged foods and should be bought in smaller quantities more frequently. (Alternatively, you may plan to freeze certain items.) Buy fresh ingredients in smaller quantities more often so you waste less and enjoy fresher ingredients.
8. Choose loose fruit and vegetables over pre-packaged to better control the quantity you need and ensure fresher ingredients.

Date Labels

Package date labels can be very confusing. Most date labels are indicative of food quality and not food safety. However, often people confuse them for food safety labels and throw away food that is safe to eat.

- "Sell by" dates are used by the manufacturer to recommend to the store when a product should be sold to a customer for best quality over its expected shelf life. "Sell by" dates do not indicate food safety.
- "Best by" dates indicate to the customer when the manufacturer ensures the product will have its best quality, and it is also not meant to indicate food safety.
- "Use by" dates are also set by the manufacturer to indicate to the customer when the product is at its peak quality.

Eating food after its "best by," "use by," or "sell by" date means that the product might not taste as good as if it was fresh but should not present any food safety concern. One important exception is infant formula. Some infants get a

majority of their nutrition from formula, and the nutritional value of food deteriorates with time. Do not use after the "use by" date has passed, since it could result in life-threatening malnutrition for the baby.

Storing Food

Storing food properly can also help ensure foods last longer. This is particularly true for produce. On average, Americans throw out 19% of vegetables and 14% of fruits after purchasing. Produce often emit or absorb a gas called ethylene. Ethylene gas is a natural gas that fruits and vegetables release as they ripen. However, if your produce rots within a few days of purchasing, you might need to separate your ethylene gas-releasers from your produce that are ethylene gas-sensitive. A list of ethylene gas-releasers and gas-sensitive produce is below:

Ethylene gas-releasing produce:

- Apples
- Cantaloupe
- Honeydew
- Kiwi
- Plums
- Avocados
- Bananas
- Nectarines
- Peaches

- Tomatoes

Ethylene gas-sensitive produce:

- Ripe Bananas
- Broccoli/Cauliflower
- Cabbage
- Carrots
- Cucumber
- Peppers
- Sweet Potatoes
- Watermelon

Serving Food

During mealtime, taking portions that you know you will finish can help to reduce food waste. To help ensure that your portion sizes do not exceed your appetite, serve meals family-style. Take a little at a time of each food you plan to eat, knowing that you can always take more if you are still hungry when you finish the portion on your plate.

Love Your Leftovers

Getting creative with how you use your leftovers can be a great way to help save them from ending up in the trash. Repurposing previous meals into soups, stews, and casseroles can help you make an easy and quick meal while reducing waste. The internet is full of great ideas for how to turn leftover items into new and creative meals. Before you toss your leftovers, consider searching for some recipes you can use to repurpose those foods.

Sharing or Donating Food

Be realistic about what you and your family will eat. If a neighbor gave you a bounty of tomatoes from their garden, but no one in your household likes tomatoes, you can donate them to a local food pantry/soup kitchen or pass them on to another friend or family member who will use them. Be aware that some organizations do not accept certain items such as prepared foods, so be sure to call and ask ahead of time about what they can and cannot accept.

Give It Back to the Earth

Composting is a natural process that allows microbes to break down certain materials into their mineral components. The finished product can be added to soil to improve growing conditions for plants in the garden or landscape. Although this use is close to the bottom of the hierarchy, composting is still a great way to create nutrient-rich soil and an educational opportunity at home or at school. Learn more about reducing food waste through composting.

Resources

- USDA: [Before You Toss Food, Wait. Check It Out!](#)

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