



FAMILY HEALTH



Online Service Offers Tools For Healthy Family Eating

(NAPSA)—According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 15 percent of children between the ages of 6 and 19 are overweight or obese. As the nation continues to battle obesity, parents are encouraged to instill in their children healthy eating habits that last a lifetime.

Meals Matter (www.mealsmatter.org), a resource offering menu planning tools and individual nutrition profiles for family members, provides simple ideas to change family eating habits. The site, which also lists nutritious recipes, will host a recipe contest Jan. 15 through March 31 to encourage parents to share quick and healthy recipes.

“With the growing concern over obesity among children, many families are re-assessing their dietary habits,” said Mary Anne Burkman, registered dietitian and contributor for Meals Matter. “By taking just a few extra minutes to plan a weekly menu and select healthy dishes, parents can have a significant impact on the health of the entire family.”

While entering the contest, participants can find ideas to change family diets. For example:

- Select a menu and stick with it. Parents should decide what foods are offered and when. Children can decide how much (if any) is eaten. Introduce a child to new, nutritious food while including some tried and true favorites.

- Eat more meals together. Family meals are not just a great way to supervise a child’s eating habits, but they also encourage conversation.

- Eat at home. Family members often consume twice as many calories when dining out versus eating at home. Super-sized portions and higher fat choices are



Sitting down to a healthy meal together is a good start to improving a family’s eating habits.

often to blame.

- Do not watch television during meals. Research shows that people eat more and faster when snacking or dining in front of the TV.

- Encourage children to participate in menu planning and meal preparation. It is not only a great learning experience, but children also enjoy the fruits of their labor.

To enter the recipe contest, visit www.mealsmatter.org and select the appropriate course category: salad, snack, appetizer, entrée and soup/stews. Participants are asked to submit a healthy original recipe that contains at least three of the five food groups:

- Milk, yogurt and cheese;
- Meat, poultry, fish, beans, eggs and nuts;
- Vegetables;
- Fruits; and
- Breads, cereal, rice and pasta.

The recipe must also be considered quick—from the pantry to the table in less than an hour. Winners will receive a \$500 gift certificate to Williams-Sonoma or \$200 in free groceries.

For more information or contest rules, visit www.mealsmatter.org.