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Family and Consumer
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Germ on a Plane

Carry-on ideas for healthy air travel

As a title “Germ on a Plane,” may not have quite the same impact as “Snakes on a Plane,” but it’s grounded in a lot more reality. Travel plans find airports jammed with fellow voyagers and personal space on overcrowded planes is almost nonexistent. It’s no wonder so many germs can hitch a free ride.

To keep germs from joining you on your journey, The Soap and Detergent Association suggests packing a few extra supplies in your carry-on luggage.

- **Pillow.** Pillows are often in short supply on airplanes. Plus, even with a clean cover, someone else has used it before you. An inflatable neck pillow or one of the small, squishy pillows that can be crammed into your carry-on tote is a better choice.
- **Handwipes.** Use them to clean your hands and to wipe off your tray table.
- **Hand gel.** Perfect to use when there isn't a convenient place to dispose of wipes. Be aware that current carry-on regulations limit the size to 3 ounces. For up-to-date information on carry-on regulations, visit www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm.
- **Bottled water.** Pick up a bottle after you pass through the security gate. It's easier to be prepared than to wait for the flight attendants to bring beverages. Drinking plenty of water will keep you from getting dehydrated – and it's better for you than caffeinated and alcoholic beverages, which can add to both dehydration and jet lag.

Source: The Soap and Detergent Association

Eating Right When the Budget's Tight

Higher food prices are driving many people back home for dinner instead of eating out. It's a great opportunity to prepare meals that are healthier and lower your cancer risk. Here's how you can shop to benefit your wallet as well as your health.

Researchers are finding that vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans may help lower your cancer risk. Try filling 2/3 or more of your plate with plant foods and 1/3 or less with lean meat, poultry, fish or dairy (and avoiding processed meat like hot dogs).

With a little planning, you can shift money you'd spend on less-than-healthy foods like rice mixes, packaged desserts, prepared sauces and dressings to basic healthy ingredients you can eat in a healthier way while staying within budget. Here are some tips:

Make your own. When it comes to snacks, it's often healthier and less expensive to simply make your own. Whip up a healthy summer dip (see below) with fresh, cut-up vegetables instead of chips.

Tomato and Red Pepper Dip

Ingredients:

1 jar (12 oz.) roasted red peppers, rinsed and drained
1 can (15 oz.) white beans, rinsed and drained
1/4 cup tomato paste, preferably reduced sodium
2 garlic cloves, minced
3 tablespoons lowfat mayonnaise
1 teaspoon dry oregano
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1/4 teaspoon ground chili powder
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Instructions:

Coarsely chop peppers. Place in food processor or blender and puree. Add beans, tomato paste, garlic, mayonnaise, oregano, cumin and chili powder. Process to smooth puree. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Let stand one hour before serving. Keeps up to 3 days, tightly covered and refrigerated. Makes 2 1/4 cups.

Buy plain rice instead of a boxed mix and flavor it with your own herbs and spices. Use healthful olive oil and vinegar to make your own dressings. (Some canned healthy foods like beans, tomato products and soups are high in sodium. Just drain and rinse your beans and choose reduced-sodium versions of tomato products and soups.)

Avoid shopping when you're hungry so you don't buy more than you need and can better resist impulse buys.

Check your refrigerator. See what needs to be used or frozen before it spoils. Then make a list of what to buy.

Plan to buy supplies for several days' worth of meals. It can help to plan in advance so you don't end up at the fast-food drive-thru when you're very busy and have few groceries at home.

Recycle leftovers. Refrigerate them within two hours and use them in another meal the next day. Add leftovers to salads, pasta, pizza or burritos. Cook aging fresh vegetables as part of a stir-fry, chili or soup. Chop overripe fruit and whirl in the blender for a sauce or smoothie with low fat yogurt. Mixed dishes can be frozen in single-serving portions – just clearly label and date them. When you are reheating leftovers, reheat solids to 165 degrees and boil soups.

Source: American Institute for Cancer Research

Chill Out With the Lycopene Leader

Who says something that tastes good can't be good for you? Sweet, cool, crunchy watermelon is packed with vitamins, minerals, and health-enhancing phytochemicals. In fact, this popular treat contains more cancer-fighting lycopene than any other fresh produce item, even tomatoes.

"Watermelon is the lycopene leader among fresh fruits and vegetables," said Leslie Coleman of the National Watermelon Promotion Board. "Watermelon contains 15 to 20 milligrams of lycopene per two-cup serving."

Lycopene provides the natural pigment that makes watermelon red, and it has potent antioxidant capabilities. Antioxidants are important for good health because they neutralize free radicals—highly reactive, imbalanced molecules that can damage tissue cells and cause disease. Emerging science suggests that the lycopene found in watermelon may help reduce the risk of prostate cancer and heart disease.

In addition to lycopene, watermelon has plenty of vitamin A, which promotes eye and skin health, and vitamin C, which boosts the immune system and protects the body against the effects of aging. It is high in potassium and fiber, and the standard two-cup serving contains just 80 calories and virtually no fat.

"Watermelon is a very wholesome and inviting alternative to processed snacks and desserts," said Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles H. Bronson. "Since it is 92 percent water, it's also a great way to keep the body hydrated following physical activity. Thankfully, you don't have to wait until summer to get your fill of this healthful food. You can find fresh Florida watermelons in your supermarket from April through July and in November and December."

Florida is one of the top producers of watermelon in the United States, along with California, Texas, and Georgia.

Native to Africa, watermelon is an edible gourd belonging to the same botanical family as squash and cucumbers. Ancestors of the modern watermelon grew wild in the Kalahari Desert and were valued by the local people as an important source of food and water. Archeological evidence suggests that watermelon was cultivated in ancient Egypt more than 5,000 years ago, but it is not believed to have reached Europe until the Moors conquered Spain. By the late 1500s, the Spanish were growing watermelons in Florida.

In 2004, Florida farmers planted 27,000 acres of watermelon. Large "picnic" melons are still the most common type grown, but increasingly, producers are switching to the smaller "icebox" varieties; their name refers to the fact that they fit easily in most refrigerators. Seedless watermelon varieties are also gaining ground because they are easy to eat and even sweeter than traditional types; they also have a longer shelf life. The latest trend at gourmet markets is the softball-sized, seedless "personal" watermelon, which can be eaten in a single sitting.

Coleman offers this advice to shoppers: "Look the watermelon over carefully before buying," she said. "Choose a firm, symmetrical watermelon that is free of bruises, cuts, and dents."

Choosing a ripe watermelon is very important, since melons won't continue to ripen much after they've been picked. Selecting a ripe watermelon is easy if you know what to look for. Before buying, lift the melon. If it's ripe, it should feel heavy for its size. Next, turn it over. On the underbelly you should see a creamy yellow splotch. If the splotch is white or green, the watermelon was harvested too soon.

"Store watermelon on the warm side," Coleman said. "A thermometer reading of 55 degrees F is ideal. However, whole melons will keep for seven to 10 days at room temperature. Store them too long, and they'll lose flavor and texture."

Before cutting, wash your watermelon with soap and water. If the melon is a big one, you probably won't be able to fit it under the faucet and would be best off washing it with a damp cloth.

Every part of the watermelon is edible, including the rind and the seeds. The fiber-rich rind can be pickled, candied, or turned into jam or jelly. The seeds are highly nutritious, packed with protein, vitamin E, and potassium, and make a healthy, tasty snack if roasted in a low oven and salted.

Watermelon can be eaten plain, or with a light sprinkling of salt to accentuate its sweetness. It's a natural choice for fruit salads, smoothies, and ices, and it's also great in savory dishes. For "Fresh from Florida" cooking ideas, visit <http://www.Florida-Agriculture.com>.

Source: Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Sciences

Health Tip: Don't Miss Breakfast

If you're in the habit of skipping breakfast, studies show you should rethink your morning routine. Eating breakfast has health benefits and can help manage your weight, according to Rutland Regional Medical Center in Vermont.

Here's what the research indicates:

- Breakfast is linked to a lower body mass, compared to people who skip the meal.
- Breakfast is shown to reduce a person's risk of obesity and insulin resistance.
- Breakfast is one of the few proven strategies to maintaining long-term weight loss.
- Breakfast is shown to improve grades and behavior among school children.

Source: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

Tips to Help You Eat Vegetables

In general:

- Buy fresh vegetables in season. They cost less and are likely to be at their peak flavor.
- Stock up on frozen vegetables for quick and easy cooking in the microwave.
- Buy vegetables that are easy to prepare. Pick up pre-washed bags of salad greens and add baby carrots or grape tomatoes for a salad in minutes. Buy packages of veggies such as baby carrots or celery sticks for quick snacks.
- Use a microwave to quickly “zap” vegetables. White or sweet potatoes can be baked quickly this way.
- Vary your veggie choices to keep meals interesting.
- Try crunchy vegetables, raw or lightly steamed.

For the best nutritional value:

- Select vegetables with more potassium often, such as sweet potatoes white potatoes, white beans, tomato products (paste, sauce, and juice), beet greens, soybeans, lima beans, winter squash, spinach, lentils, kidney beans, and split peas.
- Sauces or seasonings can add calories, fat, and sodium to vegetables. Use the Nutrition Facts label to compare the calories and % Daily Value for fat and sodium in plain and seasoned vegetables.
- Prepare more foods from fresh ingredients to lower sodium intake. Most sodium in the food supply comes from packaged or processed foods.
- Buy canned vegetables labels “no salt added.” If you want to add a little salt it will likely be less than the amount in the regular canned products.

At meals:

- Plan some meals around a vegetable main dish, such as a vegetable stir-fry or soup. Then add other foods to complement it.
- Try a main dish salad for lunch. Go light on the salad dressing.
- Include a green salad with your dinner every night.
- Shred carrots or zucchini into meatloaf, casseroles, quick breads, and muffins.
- Include chopped vegetables in pasta sauce or lasagna.
- Order a veggie pizza with toppings like mushrooms, green peppers, and onions, and ask for extra veggies.

- Use pureed, cooked vegetables such as potatoes to thicken stews, soups and gravies. These add flavor, nutrients, and texture.
- Grill vegetable kabobs as part of a barbecue meal. Try tomatoes, mushrooms, green peppers, and onions.

Make vegetables more appealing:

- Many vegetables taste great with a dip or dressing. Try a low-fat salad dressing with raw broccoli, red and green peppers, celery sticks or cauliflower.
- Add color to salads by adding baby carrots, shredded red cabbage, or spinach leaves. Include in-season vegetables for variety through the years
- Include cooked dry beans or peas in flavorful mixed dishes such as chili or minestrone soup.
- Decorate plates or serving dishes with vegetable slices.
- Keep a bowl of cut-up vegetables in a see-through container in the refrigerator. Carrot and celery sticks are traditional, but consider broccoli florettes, cucumber slices, or red or green pepper strips.

Vegetable Tips for children:

- Set a good example for children by eating vegetables with meals and as snacks.
- Let children decide on the dinner vegetables or what goes into salads.
- Depending on their age, children can help shop for, clean, peel, or cut up vegetables.
- Allow children to pick a new vegetable to try while shopping.
- Use cut-up vegetables as part of afternoon snacks.
- Children often prefer foods served separately. So, rather than mixed vegetables try serving two vegetables separately

Keep it safe:

- Wash vegetables before preparing or eating them. Under clean, running water, rub vegetables briskly with your hands to remove dirt and surface microorganisms.
- Keep vegetables separate from raw meat, poultry and seafood while shopping, preparing or storing.

Source: www.mypyramid.gov

Tips to Help You Eat Fruits

In general:

- Keep a bowl of whole fruit on the table, counter, or in the refrigerator.
- Refrigerate cut-up fruit to store for later.
- Buy fresh fruits in season when they may be less expensive and at their peak flavor.
- Buy fruits that are dried, frozen, and canned (in water or juice) as well as fresh, so that you always have a supply on hand
- Consider convenience when shopping. Buy pre-cut packages of fruit (such as melon or pineapple chunks) for a healthy snack in seconds. Choose packaged fruits that do not have added sugars.

For the best nutritional value:

- Make most of your choices whole or cut-up fruit rather than juice for the benefits dietary fiber provides.
- Select fruits with more potassium often, such as bananas, prunes and prune juice, dried peaches and apricots, cantaloupe, honeydew melon, and orange juice.
- When choosing canned fruits, select fruit canned in 100% fruit juice or water rather than syrup.
- Vary your fruit choices. Fruits differ in nutrient content.

At meals:

- At breakfast, top your cereal with bananas or peaches; add blueberries to pancakes; drink 100% orange or grapefruit juice. Or, try fruit mixed with low-fat or fat-free yogurt.
- At lunch, pack a tangerine, banana, or grapes to eat, or choose fruits from a salad bar. Individual containers of fruits like peaches or applesauce are easy and convenient.
- At dinner, add crushed pineapple to coleslaw, or include mandarin oranges or grapes in a tossed salad.
- Make a Waldorf salad, with apples, celery, walnuts, and dressing.
- Try meat dishes that incorporate fruit, such as chicken with apricots or mango chutney.
- Add fruit like pineapple or peaches to kabobs as part of a barbecue meal.
- For dessert, have baked apples, pears, or a fruit salad.

As snacks:

- Cut-up fruit makes a great snack. Either cut them yourself, or buy pre-cut packages of fruit pieces like pineapples or melons. Or, try whole fresh berries or grapes.
- Dried fruits also make a great snack. They are easy to carry and store well. Because they are dried, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup is equivalent to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of other fruits.

- Keep a package of dried fruit in your desk or bag. Some fruits that are available dried include apricots, apples, pineapple, bananas, cherries, figs, dates, cranberries, blueberries, prunes (dried plums), and raisins (dried grapes).
- As a snack, spread peanut butter on apple slices or top frozen yogurt with berries or slices of kiwi fruit.
- Frozen juice bars (100% juice) make healthy alternatives to high-fat snacks.

Make fruit more appealing:

- Many fruits taste great with a dip or dressing. Try low-fat yogurt or pudding as a dip for fruits like strawberries or melons.
- Make a fruit smoothie by blending fat-free or low-fat milk or yogurt with fresh or frozen fruit. Try bananas, peaches, strawberries, or other berries.
- Try applesauce as a fat-free substitute for some of the oil when baking cakes.
- Try different textures of fruits. For example, apples are crunchy, bananas are smooth and creamy, and oranges are juicy.
- For fresh fruit salads, mix apples, bananas, or pears with acidic fruits like oranges, pineapple or lemon juice to keep them from turning brown.

Fruit tips for children:

- Set a good example for children by eating fruit everyday with meals or as snacks.
- Offer children a choice of fruits for lunch.
- Depending on their age, children can help shop for, clean, peel, or cut up fruits.
- While shopping, allow children to pick out a new fruit to try later at home.
- Decorate plates or serving dishes with fruit slices.
- Top off a bowl of cereal with some berries. Or, make a smiley face with sliced bananas for eyes, raisins for nose, and an orange slice for a mouth.
- Offer raisins or other dried fruits instead of candy.
- Make fruit kabobs using pineapple chunks, bananas, grapes, and berries.
- Pack a juice box (100% juice) in children's lunches versus soda or other sugar-sweetened beverages.
- Choose fruit options, such as sliced apples, mixed fruit up, or 100% fruit juice that are available in some fast food restaurants.
- Offer fruit pieces and 100% fruit juice to children. There is often little fruit in "fruit-flavored" beverages or chewy fruit snacks.

Source: www.mypyramid.gov

Florida Food Fare

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Watermelon

Description: Watermelon, considered America's favorite fruit, is really a vegetable. Related to the cucumber, squash and gourd, watermelon can range in size from 7 to over 100 pounds. Although historians are unsure when the first watermelon was discovered, ancient Egyptian drawings included them and 16th century writers described the same variety in color, shape and size of watermelons that we have today.

Availability: Since watermelons require a long, warm growing season it is not surprising that Florida is a leading state in watermelon production. Harvesting usually begins in April or May in south Florida and progresses to north and west Florida by July, with June being the month of peak production.

Nutritional Value: Besides being one of America's favorite foods, watermelon is a good source of potassium, very low in sodium, fat-free and cholesterol free, making it the perfect snack. One cup of diced melon has 48 calories, 10.9g carbohydrate, 12mg calcium, 176mg potassium, 14.5mg vitamin C and 556 IU vitamin A. It also contains lycopene, a nutrient believed to prevent certain forms of cancer.

Selection and Storage: Good-quality watermelon will be firm, evenly-shaped, heavy for its size and have a deep pitched tone when slapped with an open palm. Look for smooth, slightly dull skin and creamy-colored underside. Avoid product that is partially whites or pale green, soft overall, has soft spots or is leaking a milky-white fluid. Watermelons do not ripen any further once they are cut from the vine. Handled properly, watermelons will keep well from 1 to 3 weeks. They may be stored in a fairly cool place instead of the refrigerator (until cut) but direct sunlight and excessive heat will cause rapid deterioration. Once melons are refrigerator they should remain there until used. Cut melon should be covered with plastic wrap, refrigerated and used within a day or two.

Recipes:

Watermelon Salsa:

3 cups seeded, chopped watermelon	1 tablespoon chopped green onion
1/2 cup green bell pepper, chopped	1 tablespoon jalapeno pepper, chopped*
2 tablespoons lime juice	½ teaspoon garlic salt
1 tablespoon chopped cilantro	

*use up to 2 tablespoons chopped jalapenos, depending on taste. Combine all ingredients. Cover and refrigerate one hour.