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*Family and Consumer
Sciences Department
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Need Help Finding a Hobby?

Hobbies – whether quilting or kayaking – can be rewarding, relaxing and renewing. They can provide a respite from your job, fill your time with meaningful activity after retirement, and be a source of stress relief at all stages of life.

Don't have a hobby? Consider these tips for finding leisure-time activities that suit you.

- Build on your strengths. Is there something you do well?
- Page through the newspaper or magazines to see what interests you.
- Ask friends what they enjoy doing in their leisure time
- Assess your interests. Ask yourself: What relaxes me? What do I enjoy doing? What gives me a sense of accomplishment?
- Shake it up. Add variety to your life by doing something new. If you sit in front of a computer all day for work, consider a hobby that offers exercise, such as hiking, golf or tennis. If you work on a loud assembly line or a restaurant, reading a book or doing a crossword puzzle may be more your speed.
- Look to your past. Is there something you did when you were younger that you'd like to try again, such as playing an instrument or participating in a sport?
- Brainstorm ideas. List all the activities you've ever thought sounded interesting. From that list, consider the possibilities by looking through magazines and newspapers and checking into local colleges or community classes.
- Consider these suggestions: painting; learning a foreign language; crafts; writing; cooking; travel; gardening; volunteering; music; dancing; tennis; singing; woodworking; taking a class; golfing; flower arranging; dancing; or spending time with a pet.

Source: www.MayoClinic.com

Fortify Your Knowledge About Vitamins

Vitamins are essential nutrients that contribute to a healthy life. Although most people get all the vitamins they need from the foods they eat, millions of people worldwide take supplemental vitamins as part of their health regimen.

Why Buy Vitamins?

There are many good reasons to consider taking vitamin supplements, such as over-the-counter multivitamins. According to the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), a doctor may recommend that you take them:

- For optimal health
- For certain health problems
- If you eat a vegetarian or vegan diet
- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding

Vitamin Facts

Your body uses vitamins for a variety of biological processes, including growth, digestion, and nerve function. There are 13 vitamins that the body absolutely needs; vitamins A, C, D, E, K, and the B vitamins (thiamine, riboflavin, niacin, pantothenic acid, biotin, vitamin B-6, vitamin B-12 and folate). AAFP cites two categories of vitamins.

- Water-soluble vitamins are easily absorbed by the body, which doesn't store large amounts. The kidneys remove those vitamins that are not needed.
- Fat-soluble vitamins are absorbed into the body with the use of bile acids, which are fluids used to absorb fat. The body stores these for use as needed.

Develop a Vitamin Strategy

It is important for consumers to have an overall strategy for how they will achieve optimal vitamin intakes. The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans advises that nutrient needs be met primarily through consuming foods, with supplementation suggested for certain sensitive populations.

These guidelines, published by the Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), provide science-based advice to promote health and to reduce risk for chronic diseases through diet and physical activity. They form the basis for federal food, nutrition education and information programs.

Barbara Schneeman, Ph.D., director of FDA's Office of Nutritional Products, Labeling, and Dietary Supplements, says, "The Guidelines emphasize that supplements may be useful when they fill a specific identified nutrient gap that cannot or is not otherwise being met by the individual's intake of food." She adds, "An important point made in the guidelines is that nutrient supplements are not a substitute for a healthful diet."

Special Nutrient Needs

According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, many people consume more calories than they need without taking in recommended amounts of a number of nutrients. The Guidelines warn that there are numerous nutrients – including vitamins – for which low dietary intake may be a cause of concern.

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These nutrients are:

- Calcium, potassium, fiber, magnesium, and vitamins A (as carotenoids), C, and E (for adults)
- Calcium, potassium, fiber, magnesium, and vitamin E (for children and adolescents)
- Vitamin B-12, iron, folic acid, and vitamins E and D (for specific population groups).

Regarding the use of vitamin supplements, the dietary guidelines include the following:

- **Consume a variety of nutrient-dense foods and beverages** within and among the basic food groups. At the same time, choose foods that limit the intake of saturated and trans fats, cholesterol, added sugars, salt, and alcohol.
- **Meet recommended nutrient intakes within energy needs** by adopting a balanced eating pattern, such as one of those recommended in the USDA Food Guide or the National Institute of Health's Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan.
- **If you're over age 50**, consume vitamin B-12 in its crystalline form, which is found in fortified foods or supplements.
- **If you're a woman of childbearing age who may become pregnant**, eat foods high in heme-iron and/or consume iron-rich plant foods or iron-fortified foods with an iron-absorption enhancer, such as foods high in vitamin C.
- **If you're a woman of childbearing age who may become pregnant or is in the first trimester of pregnancy**, consume adequate synthetic folic acid daily (from fortified foods or supplements) in addition to food forms of folate from a varied diet.
- **If you are an older adult, have dark skin, or are exposed to insufficient ultraviolet band radiation (such as sunlight)**, consume extra vitamin D from vitamin D-fortified foods and/or supplements.

How Vitamins Are Regulated

Vitamin products are regulated by FDA as "Dietary Supplements." The law defines dietary supplements, in part, as products taken by mouth that contain a "dietary ingredient" intended to supplement the diet.

Listed in the "dietary ingredient" category are not only vitamins, but minerals, botanicals products, amino acids, and substances such as enzymes, microbial probiotics, and metabolites. Dietary supplements can also be extracts or concentrates, and may be found in many forms. The Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994 requires that all such products be labeled as dietary supplements.

In June 2007, FDA established dietary supplement "current Good Manufacturing Practice" (cGMP) regulations requiring that manufacturers evaluate their products through testing identity, purity, strength, and composition.

Risk of Overdoing It

As is in the case with all dietary supplements, the decision to use supplemental vitamins should not be taken lightly, says Vasilios Frankos, Ph.D., Director of FDA's Division of Dietary Supplement (see next page)

Programs. “Vitamins are not dangerous unless you get too much of them, he says. “More is not necessarily better with supplements, especially if you take fat-soluble vitamins.” For some vitamins and minerals, the National Academy of Sciences has established upper limits of intake (ULs) that it recommends not be exceeded during any given day. The AAFP lists the following side effects that are sometimes associated with taking too much of a vitamin:

Fat-soluble Vitamins

- **A (retinol, retinal, retinoic acid):** Nausea, vomiting, headache, dizziness, blurred vision, clumsiness, birth defect, liver problems, possible risk of osteoporosis. You may be at greater risk of these effects if you drink high amounts of alcohol or you have liver problems, high cholesterol levels or don't get enough protein.
- **D (calciferol):** Nausea, vomiting, poor appetite, constipation, weakness, weight loss, confusion, heart rhythm problems, deposits of calcium and phosphate in soft tissues.

If you take blood thinners, talk to your doctor before taking vitamin E or vitamin K pills.

Water-soluble Vitamins

- **B-3 (niacin):** flushing, redness of the skin, upset stomach.
- **B-6 (pyridoxine, pyridoxal, and pyridoxamine):** Nerve damage to the limbs, which may cause numbness, trouble walking, and pain.
- **C (ascorbic acid):** Upset stomach, kidney stones, increased iron absorption.
- **Folic Acid (folate):** High levels may, especially in older adults, hide signs of B-12 deficiency, a condition that can cause nerve damage.

Taking too much of a vitamin can also cause problems with some medical tests or interfere with how some drugs work.

Report Problems

If you believe that you are experiencing an adverse response to taking a vitamin or any dietary supplement, Frankos advises reporting it to your health care provider, as well as the manufacturer whose name or phone number appears on the label. You can also report directly to FDA through its MedWatch program at 1.800.FDA.1088 or online at www.fda.gov/medwatch.

Starting December 22, 2007, any serious adverse events reported to a dietary supplement manufacturer must be reported to FDA within 15 days of the manufacturer receiving the adverse event report.

Source: www.fda.gov

Lighten up Your Holiday Baking

Simple substitutions can make your recipes healthful without sacrificing taste

Many recipes call for more sugar than is really necessary. Begin by cutting the amount by one-quarter to one-half. Dried fruits, such as raisins, dates or cranberries will add natural sweetness when you are cutting back on sugar. For cakes, fruit breads and muffins, use frozen apple juice concentrate, thawed to provide sweetness. Compensate for the extra liquid it adds by substituting it for half the milk (but not the eggs or oil) in a recipe.

Many holiday recipes contain saturated fat from lots of butter, cream and eggs. Healthier fats can be substituted in smaller amounts. Use $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of canola oil or “light” olive oil instead of $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of margarine (a source of trans fats). “Light” olive oil has no detectable “olive” taste when baked with other ingredients.

Although a small amount of fat provides texture and flavor, you probably won't need as much as traditional recipes require. Adjust your recipes to be lighter and leaner by substituting unsweetened applesauce or other puréed fruit for equal parts of oil or butter. Because oil is in a more liquid form than butter, you can substitute less fruit purée or less canola oil for butter. To replace cream, try low-fat evaporated milk or fat free half-and-half. Substitute two egg whites for one whole egg or try packaged egg substitute, if desired.

Many holiday recipes call for all-purpose white “enriched” flour. However, white flour has been refined and stripped of its natural fiber and some nutrients. A few simple ingredient changes can return the benefits whole grains provide. Begin by replacing half of the all-purpose flour with whole-wheat pastry flour, made from soft wheat berries. It has a lighter, finer texture than regular whole-wheat flour, making it perfect for cakes and cookies.

Other whole-grain flours — like barley, oat and brown rice flour — can replace $\frac{1}{4}$ of the flour in a recipe. For a crunchy texture and nutty taste, substitute $\frac{1}{4}$ of the all-purpose flour with nutritious wheat germ. Oats impart a hearty chewy texture and can replace $\frac{1}{3}$ of the all-purpose flour used in muffin and cake recipes. Rolled oats may be puréed in your blender to make coarse oat flour to substitute for all-purpose flour.

Source: American Institute for Cancer Research Newsletter

HOUSE FOR SALE!

Tips for Getting It Buyer-Ready

When a house is for sale, the goal is to make it as attractive as possible to potential buyers. The most cost-efficient way to spruce up the home is to clean it thoroughly, advises The Soap and Detergent Association.

Getting Rid of Clutter

Many potential buyers may not see past dirt and clutter. If the house is crowded with the owner's "stuff," they will assume that the house is too small for their possessions. Too much clutter also poses a safety - *and buying* - hazard! A person who trips over items left on the stairs is unlikely to have a good feeling about the house. In addition, a clean, clutter-free environment is more attractive than a grimy, untidy one.

Begin by purging the house, including the basement, attic and garage, of items that are no longer needed. Things that are in good condition can be sold or donated to a charity. The remainder can be thrown in the trash. Rooms will appear more spacious, closets will look bigger and shelves will look roomier to potential buyers.

Time to Clean

Focus on the rooms that potential buyers are most interested in — living room, dining room, kitchen and bathroom. Look at each room as a potential buyer might and see what catches the eye first. Make that the starting point for the cleaning process. Then, follow the top-to-bottom, left-to-right rule for cleaning each room. That way, no surface is overlooked.

Give major attention to the kitchen and bathrooms. Check the labels on cleaning products to make sure they are appropriate for the surfaces to be cleaned. Abrasive cleansers provide extra cleaning power for hard-to-remove soils like food particles and grease residue in sinks. However, they may be too harsh for surfaces that are easily scratched, such as laminate or solid surface countertops. In general, liquid and gel cleansers are less abrasive than powders.

Spray cleaners are easy to use for small areas, such as countertops, while powders or liquids mixed in a pail of water are more efficient for larger areas, such as walls and floors. Floors can become cloudy from cleaning solution residue, making them look dirty when they're actually clean. To prevent this, use a no-rinse product or rinse the floor well after each cleaning.

Combat Mold & Mildew

Mold and mildew are especially problematic in bathrooms. With all the publicity concerning the illnesses that mold can cause, prospective home buyers are more sensitive than ever about its presence. Use liquid household bleach or cleaners with bleach to remove mildew stains from shower doors, shower curtains and grout between tiles.

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Use a non-streaking cleaning product, such as a glass or glass and multi-surface cleaner, for shower doors and mirrors. A regular routine, including rinsing the tub after bathing, using a small squeegee on shower walls after each use, and drying faucets and handles to prevent water spots, will keep things clean.

Don't Forget to . . .

- Wash the windows, vacuum carpets and drapes and dust thoroughly. Use a dusting product so that the dust will be trapped and removed rather than dispersed in the air. Vacuum regularly, using long straight strokes.
- If repainting is not in the budget, carefully clean surfaces to remove dust, grime and fingerprints. Painted surfaces are usually washable, but test the cleaning solution on an inconspicuous area first. Use a non-abrasive, all-purpose cleaner. To avoid streak marks when cleaning large vertical areas, start at the bottom and work up, overlapping areas and using a circular motion.
- Keeping on top of the cleaning chores will make your home look its best. And, once a buyer is found, it'll be easy to have the house "broom ready" for that final walk-through before closing day.

Source: The Soap and Detergent Association

The Science of Sweets

Not all sweets are created equal. If you are going to nibble on dessert or rich snacks this holiday season, concentrate on those that provide at least some health benefits. Many ingredients in sweets contain plant substances that are known to lower the risk of cancer, heart and other chronic diseases. Of course, the amount you would need to eat for true health benefits is generally outweighed by fats and sugars, but in moderation there are some treats you can feel good about.

Sweet Twists of Tradition

- **Gingerbread Cookies:** Fresh ginger contains gingerol, a substance studies have shown has antioxidant properties. Laboratory studies have found gingerol may help destroy cancer cells and block the action of compounds that lead to inflammation, which might lead to higher cancer risk. Gingerol is also used for treating nausea and other digestive troubles. When ginger is dried, the gingerol breaks down and the compounds shogaols and zingerone form. Preliminary research suggests that these compounds may also have antioxidant properties. If you purchase prepared gingerbread or cookies, make sure the ingredients list ginger as opposed to ginger flavoring.

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- **Fruitcake:** This holiday perennial has garnered a bad rap for use as a possible doorstep over the years. But, along with loads of sugar, fruitcake can also contain a wide assortment of fruits. The traditional fruitcake features the preserved rind of citron, a bumpy, yellow-colored fruit. With or without citron, if you make your own, you can combine a potpourri of colorful fruits — such as cranberries, cherries, figs, and pineapple — to make a fruitcake rich with antioxidants and fiber. Cranberries, for example, are packed with antioxidants. In the laboratory, extracts from cranberries were found to stop breast cancer cells from multiplying.
- **Sugar Plums:** Originally these Christmas sweets may have featured bits of sugared plums, but modern recipes include a variety of fruits. Figs, for example, are a common main ingredient in many recipes. Figs are a rich source of fiber, along with potassium, iron and calcium. They contain the highest mineral content of any common fruit.
- **Chocolates:** A lot of attention and research has been paid to the cacao bean due to two types of flavonoids: flavanols and procyanidins. These two substances are antioxidants, and cocoa has them in rich supply. Studies have found antioxidants can improve circulation, protect heart health, and help control inflammation, which may increase the risk of cancer.

The darker the chocolate, the more cocoa and flavonoids it contains. (White chocolate contains no cocoa.) Dark chocolate can contain more than twice as much cocoa as milk chocolate, and far less sugar and fat. Look for the percent of cocoa on the package and aim for a cocoa content of at least 70 percent.

- **Mixed or Candied Nuts:** A handful of almonds, walnuts, and/or macadamias are some of the nuts that contain plenty of healthful substances. Studies have found a link between people who regularly eat small amounts of nuts and low incidence of heart disease. Most of the fats in nuts are mono- and poly- unsaturated, as opposed to the saturated fats found in animal products. These types of fats can lead to lower LDL (the “bad”) cholesterol. Preliminary studies have found some substances in nuts associated with a reduced risk of colon and stomach cancers. Walnuts, for example, contain ellagic acid, which laboratory studies have found can cause certain cancerous cells to die. Nuts are also a source of zinc, magnesium, vitamin E and selenium.

Branching Out

Numerous studies have found that eating a wide diversity of fruits and vegetables provides greater health benefits than focusing on a few, no matter how many of those few you eat. To add some healthful substances to your feasts, find some colorful fruits or vegetables that you typically don't eat and find a dessert recipe for them. For example:

- If you are a pie person, try some unique pie fillings, such as butternut, squash, rhubarb, or banana.
- With dark melted chocolate at hand, you can dip any number of fruits, such as figs, dried peaches, bananas, and oranges.

Source: American Institute for Cancer Research

LEAD POISONING

What is lead poisoning?

Lead is a metal that occurs naturally in the earth's crust. Lead used to be in paint and gasoline, but in 1977, federal regulations virtually eliminated lead from paint for general use in the U.S. But homes built before 1977 are likely to still contain lead-based paint. Also, paints from other countries are not held to the same standards as the U.S. In our country, lead can still be found in contaminated soil, household dust, drinking water, lead-glazed pottery and some metal jewelry.

Lead is a very strong poison. When a person swallows a lead object or inhales lead dust, some of the poison can stay in the body and cause serious health problems. An estimated 25% of homes with kids who are 6 years old or younger have significant amounts of lead in contaminated paint, dust, soil, and plumbing. Unfortunately, you can't see, taste, or smell lead.

Who is at risk?

Lead is especially dangerous for children. Small children can be exposed by eating lead-based paint chips, chewing objects painted with lead-based paint, or swallowing house dust or soil that contains lead. Children 6 years and younger are at particular risk for lead exposure because they still put their hands in their mouths a lot. And they absorb lead more easily than do adults. Children's nervous systems are still developing, so poisons like lead have a much bigger effect. Lead also damages babies before they are born.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of lead poisoning may include:

- Irritability
- Aggressive behavior
- Low appetite and energy
- Difficulty sleeping
- Headaches
- Less sense of smell and feeling
- Loss of previous developmental skills (in young children)
- Anemia (low red blood cells)
- Constipation
- Abdominal pain/cramping (usually the first sign of a high, toxic dose of lead poison)
- Very high levels may cause vomiting, staggering walk, muscle weakness, seizures, or coma

These symptoms may or may not be present, and are similar to many other common illnesses. But in cases where some of these symptoms are present for a long time, no other cause has been found, and there may have been some exposure to lead, then tests for poisoning should be considered.

Lead poisoning most often builds up over time due to repeated exposure to small amounts of lead. In this case, there may not be any obvious symptoms, but the lead can still cause serious health problems. Possible complications include:

- Reduced IQ or failure at school
- Slowed body growth
- Hearing problems
- Behavior or attention problems
- Kidney damage

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Is there a test for lead poisoning?

A blood test is available to measure the amount of lead in your blood and to estimate the amount of your recent exposure to lead. Blood tests are commonly used to screen children for lead poisoning.

How is lead poisoning treated?

The best treatment for mild lead poisoning is to stop the exposure. Removal of the source of lead is critical to reducing blood lead levels. Whether or not to treat the child depends on how much lead is in the child's blood. If it's a small amount, the child may just have to take iron supplements. In severe cases with high lead levels, a child might be hospitalized so that he or she can receive intravenous (IV) medication — chelation therapy — to reduce lead levels in the blood. In chelation therapy, the medicine (chelating agent) binds with the lead so that it's carried out of the body in the child's urine.

What can I do to prevent lead poisoning in my child?

- Do not allow children to chew or mouth painted surfaces that may have been painted with lead-based paint. Keep your child away from any peeling paint which may contain lead.
- Children should not have toys or old furniture which may have lead paint. Throw out old painted toys if you do not know whether the paint contains lead.
- Keep your home as dust free as possible. If you suspect that you might have lead-based paint, wet mop floors, furniture, and window sills to remove dust. Watch out for water damage that can make paint peel.
- If you have a water lead problem, run or flush water that has been standing overnight before drinking or cooking with it.
- If your water has been tested high in lead, consider installing a filtering device or switch to bottled water for drinking and cooking.
- There can be lead in the soil around your house, so it's important to wash your hands and help your child develop good hand-washing habits. Be sure your child washes his or her hands before eating, after playing outside, and at bedtime. Also wash objects children frequently put in their mouths.
- Avoid canned goods from foreign countries until the ban on lead soldered cans goes into effect.
- If imported wine containers have a lead foil wrapper, wipe the rim and neck of the bottle with a towel moistened with lemon juice, vinegar, or wine before using.
- Don't store wine, spirits, or vinegar-based salad dressings in lead crystal decanters for long periods of time, as lead can leach out into the liquid.

Source: Colleen Treep, UF Pharmacy Student, with Mary Keith, PhD, LD/N, Extension Agent, Hillsborough County, University of Florida

Florida Food Fare

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Gifts from the Kitchen

Though most of us have little time to spare, there seems to be a trend toward holiday homemade gifts reminiscent of our ancestors who didn't have the luxury of going to the local mall. For some reason the smallest homemade gift brings so much more joy than the slippers, sweaters or tools purchased from the store.

There are many gifts you can make right in your own kitchen. Making flavored vinegar has become popular for gift giving. It can be used in salad dressings or marinades to add variety and zest to your recipes. Flavored vinegar can be substituted in any recipe calling for plain vinegar. Just use your creativity. Flavored coffee and tea are also popular, along with spiced nuts, caramel corn, homemade fudge, and jams and jellies. Choose decorative containers or decorate your own with bright fabric, dried flowers or herbs and ribbon. Homemade mini-loaves of various nut breads or fruit breads wrapped creatively are always a welcome gift. Mix some dried herbs and flowers for a fragrant potpourri or an herbal sachet.

Another favorite gift idea is a "mix in a jar". Layer the dry ingredients for brownies, cakes or cookies in a clean wide-mouth jar. Seal, decorate and attach baking instructions. You don't have to confine these great mixes to a glass jar. You can fill a heavy plastic bag and put it in a decorative tin or cookie jar. Fill a cloth lined basket or mixing bowl with a bag of cookie or brownie mix and cooking supplies, such as a wooden spoon, measuring cups and a timer.

Nothing says, "I love you," like a gift of food or a gift you have made with your own hands. They make great gifts anytime, not just for holidays. Try the following idea or come up with your own. For flavored vinegar recipes check <http://recipesource.com>. For other great gifts ideas from the kitchen try www.kitchenlink.com and www.allrecipes.com.

Herbal Sachet

2 ounces dried lavender flowers OR rose petals OR 1 ounce dried marjoram buds	1/2 ounce dried rosemary
1/2 ounce dried thyme	1/2 ounce dried bergamot
1/2 ounce dried sweet woodruff	1 ounce dried scented geranium leaves

Blend all ingredients in a large bowl. Put mixture into jars or tins and close tightly. Allow fragrances to mingle for 10 days to 2 weeks. Shake container every few days. Make sachet out of lace, linen, thin cotton or cheesecloth and tie with a ribbon.