

Wellness Works: March is National Nutrition Month

March is National Nutrition Month--can't you just feel the excitement in the air?! (Okay, some of us might be just a little more excited than others...) Anyway, to celebrate Nutrition Month, we wanted to recognize a common nutrition challenge and share some resources you may find helpful.

At times, we all find ourselves too busy at work and too busy at home--and too busy to cook! In a tough economy, we may eat out less or our restaurant choices may change, but we still have times when we need to eat on the run. But this doesn't have to signal the end of our good intentions for a wellness lifestyle. Most restaurants offer some choices that fit better with our health goals. (We can still have some of our favorite less-than-healthy choices. Mixing in some healthier choices allows us to still indulge, but we're satisfied with smaller amounts!) Here are a couple of links to websites to help you identify healthier choices in fast food/fast casual restaurants:

- Park Nicollet has a “Fast Food Calculator” at <http://www.parknicollet.com/tools/fastfood.cfm>, which includes traditional fast foods but also has fast casual restaurant choices like Panera and Chipotle. For Chipotle, you can “construct” your favorite burrito or burrito bol, from the tortilla (or not...) to all of the toppings. As you add toppings, the site compiles information on your creation's nutritional content, including calories, protein, and fat. Panera's listings include nutritional information on a variety of their soups, sandwiches and breads, but also coffee and tea drinks, such as mochas and lattes.
- The American Heart Association website includes a tool called “My Fats Translator” at <http://www.myfatstranlator.com/>. This calculator allows you to type in your age, height, weight, and usual activity level, and it provides you with your estimated calorie needs as well as heart healthy guidelines for total fat, saturated fat, and trans fat intake. Scroll down a bit, and you'll find suggestions for healthier choices when dining out.

We can also save money by stocking up on healthier snacks, which can keep us from making a mid-afternoon vending machine raid (but be careful to store your snacks in “critter-proof” packaging!). Here are a few links to websites to help you identify healthier choices at the grocery store:

- Many food packages make claims about what's inside, which can be confusing or even overwhelming. The Food and Drug Administration has information to help you decipher the information on food labels at <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~acrobat/nutfacts.pdf> . The American Dietetic Association also has a quick guide to interpreting food labels at http://www.eatright.org/ada/files/Shop_Smart.pdf.
- Quiz yourself to see how well you understand information on food labels by taking the Food Label Quiz at <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/flquiz1.html>.
- The American Dietetic Association has 25 suggestions for healthy snacks for kids (or for the kid in you!) at http://www.eatright.org/ada/files/Snacks_for_Kids_English.pdf.
- For more information on this or other nutrition questions, the American Dietetic Association has compiled a “Good Nutrition Reading List” at http://www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/ada/hs.xsl/nutrition_4927_ENU_HTML.htm . The list includes book recommendations for topics including lifestyle and weight management, food allergies, diabetes and other health issues, sports nutrition, and kid's nutrition.

Need more ideas? Come to the Wellness Works presentation on Tuesday, April 21st from 12-1 PM, when a nutritionist from Nutritional Weight and Wellness will talk about ways we can “Eat Fast without Fast Food.”

Upcoming Wellness Works presentations:

March:

Posture Guidelines for the Workplace

Monday, March 23rd, 2-3 PM

April:

Eat Fast without Fast Food

Tuesday, April 21st, 12-1 PM