



## FAMILY LIVING FOCUS

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### Put your Best Fork Forward

It's time to celebrate National Nutrition Month! Every year in March, we give attention to nutrition efforts. This year's theme is "Put your best fork forward." It is a great theme. While we may not all succeed 100% of the time reaching our diet and exercise goals for the year, we can at a minimum focus each day on putting our best fork forward. How can we best do that? According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics we can-

1. "Create an eating style that includes a variety of your favorite, healthful foods." There are no good or bad foods, just foods eaten in moderation. Choose foods that you enjoy, including a variety of things that are eaten in their natural form. For example, a fresh apple is better than apple pie.
2. "Practice cooking more at home and experiment with healthier ingredients." While eating out can be enjoyable and less work for you, making healthy choices can get tricky. So, give cooking at home a try more often. If you don't enjoy cooking, try making it fun by inviting others to join you in the kitchen. Or, why not make one weekend meal with a theme? Your children will love Italian night with festive music playing in the background or setting the table with a red and white checkered table cloth. The sky is the limit.
3. "How much we eat is as important as what we eat. Eat and drink the right amount for you, as MyPlate encourages us to do." Be mindful of what you put in your mouth. It is so easy to overeat just because "it's there." Put the candy dish in your cupboard or desk drawer, and replace it with a bowl of fresh fruit. You will definitely eat less of it, if it is out of sight.
4. "Find activities that you enjoy and be physically active most days of the week." Getting to the gym can be a real challenge when done alone. Find yourself an exercise buddy. It is more fun to drag yourself to the gym when you know that your best friend is waiting to work out with you. Ride your bike with your spouse or take a long walk with your dog. Whatever gets you off the couch- do it!
5. "Manage your weight or lower your health risks by consulting a registered dietitian nutritionist. RDNs can provide sound, easy-to-follow personalized nutrition advice to meet your lifestyle, preferences and health-related needs." Make sure you know your numbers. If you haven't had a physical in a while; make an appointment today to have your weight, blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol levels checked. If your numbers are high take control, seek out the

assistance of a professional dietitian and make some changes. You only get one life to live- make it the best and take control of your own destiny.

So are you ready to “put your best fork forward?” Still need some help in getting started? Call your local Penn State Extension office, or check out their website for fun and educational classes that will help you get on the “healthy road.” See <http://extension.psu.edu/> for courses and workshops available in your community.

Theme and concepts courtesy of the *American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*

**Lenelle Roberts** is the coordinator for the Capital Region Nutrition Links Program, which is one of the many programs of Penn State Cooperative Extension. Penn State is an affirmative action, Equal Opportunity University, and all interested individuals, regardless of race, color, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, age or disability, are encouraged to attend. Penn State encourages persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation or have questions about the physical access provided, please contact our office at (717) 921-8803 in advance of your participation or visit.