



March is National Nutrition Month, when the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics reminds everyone to return to the basics of healthy eating.

Perhaps the month of March was chosen as many need a jump start to the New Year's Resolutions. Here in New Orleans, post Mardi Gras, perhaps some have refreshed their nutritional habits with Lenten sacrifices. Whatever your motivation, it's always good return to the basics of healthy eating.

The 2017 theme for National Nutrition Month is "*Put Your Best Fork Forward*"; which serves as a reminder that each one of us holds the tool to make healthier food choices.

I often feel like a broken record when it comes to nutrition. Looking back on the themes of National Nutrition Month, while creative, are repetitive and simple... eat right.

Returning to basics is simple: Eating right doesn't have to be complicated — simply begin to shift to healthier food and beverage choices. These recommendations from the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* can help get you started.

- Emphasize fruit, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat or fat-free milk and milk products.
- Include lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs and nuts.
- Make sure your diet is low in saturated fats, trans fats, salt (sodium) and added sugars.

Make Your Calories Count

Think nutrient-rich rather than "good" or "bad" foods. The majority of your food choices should be packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutrients, and lower in calories. Making smart food choices can help you stay healthy, manage your weight and be physically active.

Focus on Variety

Eat a variety of foods from all the food groups to get the nutrients your body needs. Fruits and vegetables can be fresh, frozen or canned. Eat more dark green vegetables such as leafy greens and broccoli and orange vegetables including carrots and sweet potatoes. Vary your protein choices with more fish, beans and peas. Eat at least 3 ounces of whole-grain cereals, breads, crackers, rice or pasta every day.

Know Your Fats

Look for foods low in saturated fats and trans fats to help reduce your risk of heart disease. Most of the fats you eat should be monounsaturated and polyunsaturated oils. Check the nutrition label on food labels for total fat and saturated fat.

Monthly challenge:

Teenage Athlete- Don't over think nutrition. There is no magic product, keep it simple, go back to the snacks of pre-school.... Cheese sticks, grapes, "bugs on a log" (celery stick with peanut butter and raisins), etc...

Parents – Don't make healthy eating stressful. By keeping the healthy basics in the house your family will be responsible for making their own choices. That way, your job starts and stops at the grocery. Review last month's newsletter for shopping tips.