Growing Healthy Families

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Healthy beginnings

Spring is a time of new beginnings — new life appears from underneath winter's snow and cold.

In springtime, there is more daylight and the weather is warmer. It's a perfect time to get the whole family outside — go for a walk together, fly a kite, or get out your bikes and go for a ride. Plan a hike and pack a healthy picnic lunch. Check out the Fit WIC Fun and Games Page on the back of your insert for more fun ideas.

Make healthy food choices this spring. Try seasonal foods, like greens, asparagus, artichokes, peas and berries. Try the recipe in this issue for Ginger Broccoli or Greens.

Celebrate spring with healthy beginnings!

Farm to Family's almost here

During the summer, you can get coupons for free, fresh fruits and vegetables from local farmers' markets from WIC. When you use Farm to Family coupons, you help support local farmers and you help your family eat well — everyone benefits. A complete schedule of Farm to Family events will be available in your next Growing Healthy Families newsletter insert — watch for it!

Folic acid

Folic acid is a B vitamin that everyone needs for good health.

Folic acid is especially important for women of child-bearing years, as it helps protect unborn babies. Women who eat plenty of folic acid are less likely to have babies with spine or brain defects.

Folic acid may also help protect against heart disease and stroke.

The best sources of folic acid are enriched breakfast cereals, beans and lentils, leafy green vegetables, oranges, nuts and seeds.

Breakfast cereals, breads, pastas and other grain products may be enriched with folic acid. Folic acid has been added to some of these foods. Check the list of ingredients to find those with folic acid.

Good sources of folic acid

Lentils

Enriched breakfast cereals

Enriched pastas

Enriched breads

Spinach

Orange juice

Asparagus

Pineapple juice

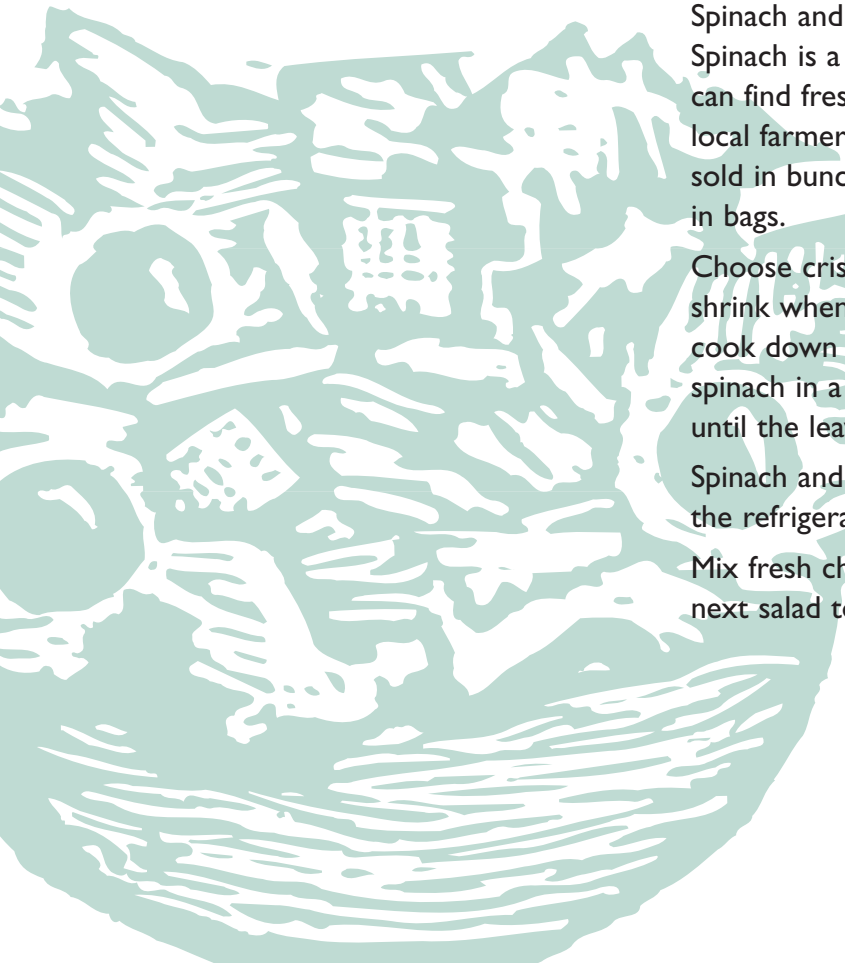
Broccoli

Peas

Oranges

Kiwi fruit

Romaine lettuce



Spinach power

Spinach and other greens are packed with nutrition and flavor. Spinach is a great source of iron, vitamin A and folic acid. You can find fresh spinach in the grocery store all year and at your local farmers' market in the summertime. Fresh spinach may be sold in bunches, as loose leaves, or washed and ready to use in bags.

Choose crisp leaves with good green color. Leafy greens will shrink when cooked. For example, 1 pound of fresh spinach will cook down to 1 cup, or 2 servings of cooked spinach. Place spinach in a covered pot with a tablespoon of water and cook until the leaves are slightly wilted, 1 to 2 minutes.

Spinach and other greens should be stored in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. It is best to use greens within 3 days.

Mix fresh chopped spinach or tender baby leaf spinach into your next salad to introduce it slowly.

Broccoli

Broccoli is colorful and tastes great. Broccoli is also a great source of vitamins A and C, fiber, folic acid and iron. Raw broccoli has a mild taste kids like. Try these delicious broccoli ideas:

- Steam or microwave fresh broccoli spears. Sprinkle with a small amount of shredded low-fat cheddar cheese.
- Mix together cooked broccoli, cauliflower and carrots. Try seasoned with dill or curry powder.
- Instead of chips and dip, try broccoli spears for dipping into low-fat Ranch dressing or salsa.
- Add finely chopped broccoli to tacos or burritos.
- Add broccoli to your favorite stir-fry.
- Toss finely chopped broccoli into soups, noodle or rice dishes.
- Add finely chopped broccoli into meat loaf or lasagna.
- Serve cooked broccoli on a baked potato. Top with shredded low-fat cheddar cheese and/or salsa.
- Combine raw broccoli, cauliflower, tomato slices and cooked pasta. Toss with low-fat Italian dressing and parmesan cheese. Refrigerate.
- Broccoli is portable. Pack a small bag of raw broccoli spears to go.

Ginger Broccoli or Greens

Serves 4

1 tablespoon olive oil (or other vegetable oil)
1 1/2 teaspoon fresh grated ginger (or 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger)
1 teaspoon minced garlic
2 cups broccoli, chopped
or 4 cups greens, chopped (try spinach, bok choy, beet, collard, mustard or turnip greens, kale or Swiss chard)
2 tablespoons water

Combine oil, ginger and garlic in a hot skillet over medium heat. Add broccoli or greens and stir fry until coated with seasonings, about 2 minutes. Add water and cover. Cook over very low heat until broccoli or greens are bright green and tender. Broccoli will take about 5 minutes to cook; greens will take less time — about 2 minutes.

Nutrition analysis per serving: Calories 43, Protein 1 gram, Carbohydrate 3 grams, Fat 4 grams, Sodium 12 milligrams

clip & save recipe!

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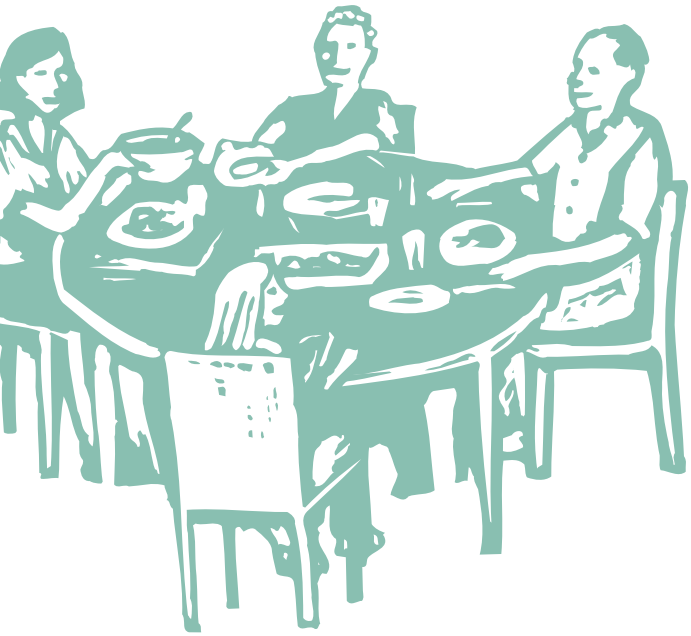
A child's role model



Children tend to copy what they see others doing. This is how they learn new behaviors. Who is your child's most important role model for eating habits and physical activity? It's you!

A study showed parents can influence their children's behavior more than anyone else. Some children named sports celebrities, musicians, actors and actresses as role models. However, parents were named as their top role models.

Help your child learn healthy eating and activity habits early in life. Eat with your child. Be active with your child. Your child is learning healthy habits to last a lifetime.

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