

# FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES NEWS

## JANUARY/FEBRUARY, 2005

Dear Friends of Extension,

Happy New Year! This is the time of year to evaluate the happenings of the past year, and to make plans and set goals for the new year. This newsletter contains information and ideas that should help to bring your goals to reality!

OSU Extension – Enriching Lives in Hocking County,

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County Extension Director

*“Prepare your mind to receive the best that life has to offer.” – **Ernest Holmes***

### **In This Newsletter:**

Portion Distortion Website  
Sucralose: A New Sweetener  
Q & A – Do-Not-Call List Facts  
A Child’s Role Model  
Family Times  
Balanced Fitness

### **Calendar of Events**

#### **January**

- 10 6 PM, Youth Board Mtg.  
Youth Center  
17 Holiday, Office Closed  
20 1:15 PM, FNP Nutrition Class.  
Metro. High Rise  
25 10 AM, FNP Nutrition Class,  
Dept. of Jobs/Family Ser.

#### **February**

- 1 5 PM, Dollars and Sense Class,  
Youth Center  
17 1:15 PM, FNP Nutrition Class  
Metro. High Rise  
22 10 AM, FNP Nutrition Class  
Dept. of Jobs/Family Ser.  
23 6 PM, FNP Food Budgeting  
Class, Laurelville Head Start

#### **Upcoming**

March 28, April 4 and 11, 7 PM  
Making Life Decisions – Watch for  
more details!

### **Portion Distortion Website**

Learn how to avoid weight gain by watching portion sizes.

During the holiday season, when gatherings and even shopping trips are often centered on food, weight gain can seem unavoidable. Watching portion sizes can help shed those extra pounds in the new year.

New additions to the “Portion Distortion Interactive Quiz” section of the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute’s (NHLBI) Web Site show the difference in size and calories between portions offered 20 years ago and what is often a standard serving today. “This site not only teaches people how portion sizes have changed and calories have increased, but also the amount of physical activity one has to do to burn up those extra calories,” said Karen Donato, S.M., R.D., coordinator of NHLBI’s Obesity Education Initiative.

For instance, you can still enjoy cookies, as long as you know the calories they contain. Today, some cookies provide 220 more calories than those that were offered 20 years ago. After snacking on today’s bigger cookie, you would need to wash your car for over an hour to burn off those extra calories. And watch for those foods that may seem healthier for you. For instance, even a chicken Caesar salad can pack on the calories. One offered 20 years ago typically contained 390 calories, compared to more than 700 in those served today. You would have to walk your dog for over an hour to burn those additional calories.

Since its debut over two years ago, the site has been a popular way to get people to think about their food

portions and the calories they contain. This newer version includes eight additional common foods and beverages such as a slice of pizza, specialty coffees, and muffins. These are items that many people consume everyday without thinking about the caloric content. A mocha coffee typically contains 350 calories and a large muffin has 500 calories, so be prepared to take at least a two-hour hike to walk off your breakfast.

The “Portion Distortion Interactive Quiz” is part of the Aim for a Healthy Weight program offered by NHLBI’s Obesity Education Initiative. The NHLBI’s Obesity Education Initiative was established in 1991 to help reduce the prevalence of overweight, obesity and physical activity in order to lower the risk of developing heart disease and other conditions. The quiz can be accessed at <http://hin.nhlbi.nih.gov/portion/>.

Source: Home and Family News, OSU Extension, Fairfield County, December, 2004.

### **Sucralose: A New Sweetener**

A fairly new sweetener that has become very popular is sucralose. It is actually made from sugar but has no calories and that confuses many people. So how can that be?

Sucralose, which is marketed under the brand name Splenda is in fact made from sugar but does not have any calories. The reason is simple: Sucralose isn’t absorbed by the body in the intestinal tract (or anywhere else). Since it just passes over your taste buds and through your system, no calories (or anything else) get digested.

The reason sucralose isn't absorbed is because of how it is made. Manufacturers start with table sugar, or sucrose, which is made up of hydrogen, oxygen and a few carbon atoms linked together in a specific arrangement. Manufacturers replace three hydrogen-oxygen groups from that sucrose molecule with three atoms of chlorine. The result is sucralose – a compound that the body doesn't break down or absorb, which means zero calories for consumers.

Did you raise an eyebrow at the word "chlorine"? Nutritionists say not to worry. The amount of chlorine found in sucralose is far less than you would ingest from consuming regular old table salt (also known as sodium chloride). Besides, neither the chlorine nor anything else in sucralose is absorbed by the body, so you have an added measure of reassurance if the thought of consuming chlorine still bothers you.



The process of transforming sucrose to sucralose makes other alterations to the original sugar, too. For one thing, sucralose is sweeter than sugar, so manufacturers usually bulk it up with other ingredients – starchy powders such as maltodextrin or dextrose – to allow people to measure the product more like they would sugar. Now, both maltodextrin and dextrose do have calories, so be sure to read labels when using more than just a bit. Remember:

According to U.S. labeling laws, anything that has less than 5 calories per serving can be rounded down to zero calories in the nutrition label. The key is: if a product has 4 calories per serving, it can be labeled as "zero calories."

But if you have a real sweet tooth and consume 10 servings of the product, you would add 40 calories to your diet and may not know it. If you are keeping careful calorie or carbohydrate count, you might want to contact the manufacturer to get exact nutrition information.

This article does not indicate any product endorsement by OSU Extension.

Source: OSU Extension's *Chowline*, News and Media Relations, October 3, 2004.

### **Convenient Utility Bill Paying Services Often Come With a Price Tag**

Consumers should be aware that some services that allow online and over-the-telephone utility bill payments may cost as much as \$6 per month and take up to five business days to notify the utility of their transaction, the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), the residential utility advocate, has found.

The OCC researched third-party online and telephone bill paying services as well as programs offered by local electric, natural gas and telephone companies across Ohio. The research has led to a new publication, "Paying utility bills: The cost of convenience," available free of charge to residential customers through the OCC's web site at [www.pickocc.org](http://www.pickocc.org) or its toll free hotline at 1-877-742-5622.

"Consumers should pay close attention and realize that convenience in paying utility bills often comes with a

price tag,” said Janine Migden-Ostrander, Consumers’ Counsel. “Some consumers may add up the annual cost of paying their utility bills online or over the phone and decide that paying by mail is more economical. For others, the convenience of using these services may be worth the price. It is an individual choice and consumers should weigh the costs against the benefits.”

The OCC found that while the majority of utility-run programs are free to customers, many third-party services charge a fee each time a payment is made. Depending on the service, customers may be able to pay a utility bill with a credit card, debit card, electronic check or bank transfer.

The OCC’s publication outlines several factors that consumers should consider before deciding to use a third-party payment service, including:

**Price** – While the OCC found that some utility bill paying services are free of charge, some services charge upwards of \$6 per bill to pay online or by telephone.

**Processing Times** – Payments made through online programs may take up to five business days before they are reflected on customers’ accounts while payments made by telephone usually post within one to three business days. If due dates are not met, some customers could face disconnection and/or late payment penalties depending on the utility.

**Security** – When making financial transactions online, consumers should take precautions, including using a secure browser and reading the web site’s privacy policy. Consumers making payments over the telephone or through the Internet should keep a record of each

transaction and review their monthly credit card, bank and utility statements for any errors, duplicate transactions or unauthorized payments.

Many third-party bill paying services are not required to guarantee that payments will be credited to a customer’s account in a timely manner,” said Migden-Ostrander. “For customers facing late payment fees or the disconnection of a utility service, it is vital that they consider the most efficient manner possible to pay their bill.”

Many utility companies have payment centers or authorized agents that, by law, must accept and post payments within one business day.

Source: Ohio Consumers’ Counsel.

### **Q & A – Do-Not-Call List Facts**

**Q.** Can I still register for the national Do-Not-Call list?

**A.** Yes, The Do-Not-Call list is free and can be accessed online at [www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov) or by calling toll free to 1-888-382-1222. Consumers can register their home telephone, fax, pager and cell phone numbers at any time. Once a number is registered, it can take up to 90 days for it to be removed from telemarketers’ calling lists.

**Q.** If I registered last year, do I need to renew my registration this year?

**A.** No. Registration of a number lasts for five years, at which point it can be renewed. If you change telephone numbers, be sure to register your new number if you want to continue to receive fewer telemarketing calls.

**Q.** Telemarketers have continued to call despite my registration. How is this possible?

**A.** While the national list can prevent unwanted telemarketing calls

made by most companies, charities and political organizations are exempt. In addition, if you have an “established business relationship” with a company (for example, you pay a bill to them every month) they may continue to call you.

If you have been on the Do-Not-Call list for 90 days and a business calling your home does not fall into one of these categories, it may be in violation of federal and state telemarketing laws and rules.

Q. How can I file a complaint against a violator of the telemarketing rules?

A. Complaints can be filed by calling the Ohio Attorney General’s office toll free at 1-800-282-0515 or online at [www.ag.state.oh.us](http://www.ag.state.oh.us). The Attorney General may seek civil penalties against telemarketers who violate the Do-Not-Call list. Be sure to document as much information about the call as possible, including the date and time of the call.

Source: Consumers’ Corner. Ohio Consumers’ Council, Nov/Dec, 2004.

### **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 – their mom and dad!**

A survey done by the American Dietetic Association showed that parents can influence their children’s behavior more than anyone else. Some children named sports celebrities, musicians, actors and actresses as role models.

### **However, mothers and fathers 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!**

**Remember – your child is watching! And learning!**

Source: Nutrition Matters, Inc, 2004.



### **Family Times**

Families who eat together tend to be healthier and happier. They share stories about what is happening in their lives. They talk about their hopes and dreams for the future. They become more connected to each other. Family meals help children feel more secure in today’s world.

*Make family meals a priority in your home. Take time to eat with your family.*

*Keep it simple! You want to spend time with your family, not cooking.*

*Ask everyone to help prepare the meal. Cooking will be quicker. Children like to eat what they help to cook.*

*Start family meals when your children are young. It will become a habit for them.*

Source: Nutrition Matters, Inc. 2004.

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