March Wellness Article

When it comes to food, think beyond the table!

One of the most popular, frustrating, and often-debated topics of discussion is nutrition, - which becomes especially timely during the observance of National Nutrition Month in March. This year’s theme is *Beyond the Table,* which emphasizes how healthy choices are not just centered around a kitchen table anymore.

With our busy schedules, endless options of convenience foods and drinks, and a whole new world of snacks, many of us find ourselves rarely eating at a table anymore. Food has never been more accessible, and yet we don’t necessarily feel better about our nutrition. Deciding on what to cook or consume and how it  fits into our highly individualized health needs creates a lot of confusion around nutrition.

Although one size does not fit all when it comes to nutrition, there are general recommendations that apply to most people. One recommendation is to focus on eating whole foods. From fruit, to vegetables, to grains to our choices of protein – eat the least processed form of those foods. Choosing whole foods helps us limit added sugars and other ingredients that are often found in highly processed foods. Also, eating a variety of foods is important to get the full range of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, fiber and much more. Try a new fruit, vegetable or grain once a month to help you mix it up, or each week let a different family member choose the fruits and vegetables. Another recommendation to up your nutrition game is to make half your plate fruits and vegetables. Fruits and vegetables are high in fiber, offer a variety of vitamins and minerals, and are full of antioxidants which all help your body function better.

Finding the balance between all the food choices available and what is healthiest is where we get to take control of our health and to be empowered to make the best nutrition decisions that help us feel our best – physically, emotionally and mentally. Take a moment to think about your food and drink choices – where do they come from? How are they processed? What is added to them? How are you preparing them? There is a lot to think about with relation to nutrition, and it is such an integral part of our daily life. Every day, we have many opportunities to positively impact our health through our choices.

If you are feeling like you might need more guidance or have specific health concerns that you want to address, you might want to consider making an appointment with a registered dietitian nutritionist. Registered dietitian nutritionists, also known as RDNs, are experts when it comes to nutrition and helping individuals navigate how to reach their specific goals. For more individualized help with your nutrition goals, talk to your primary care provider about a referral to a dietitian. Appointments can be made at Ridgecrest Regional Hospital. Check with your insurance to see if RDN visits are covered as coverage varies, or you may pay personally.

National Nutrition Month is an opportunity for us to remember how powerful nutrition is in promoting better health and wellbeing. Often, it is the small, simple changes we make that help us have big impacts on our health.

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