

# Living Well

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES NEWSLETTER FOR NORTHEAST COLORADO



## March-April 2019

### Antioxidants Battle for Your Body

March is National Nutrition Month, so what better way to celebrate than by adding some antioxidants to your plate! "Antioxidants are like warriors in your body, fighting against free radicals and oxidative stress." states Melissa Wdowik, PhD, RDN, FAND. Although not a new topic, antioxidants are not often fully understood.

Normal functions of our body (such as breathing and physical activity), stress, bacterial and viral infections, and exposure to things such as cigarette smoke or pollution are examples of factors that produce substances called free radicals. Free radicals attack healthy cells and can lead to plaque buildup in arteries, heart disease, cancer, the development of diabetes, dementia, arthritis, eye diseases and the aging process. Antioxidants help protect healthy cells from the damage, called oxidative stress, caused by free radicals. These little powerhouses safeguard from chronic diseases, infection and cognitive decline to name a few.

The best way to get an adequate amount of antioxidants is to eat at least 2 cups of fruits and 2 ½ cups of vegetables a day. Be sure to include a variety of foods from all food groups and a wide variation of every color to ensure you get them all since no single antioxidant can do everything.

The important thing to understand is we can and should get plenty of antioxidants from natural food sources versus supplements. Studies have shown antioxidant supplements can actually increase health risks, interact with medications, and be overly concentrated in one source and underrepresented in another. The other important thing to keep in mind is the additional diverse compounds in foods that cannot be replicated in supplements improve the absorption and function of antioxidants.

So, include tomato, avocado and spinach on your sandwich, toss in some colorful peppers and broccoli in your salad, add fresh berries to your yogurt or oatmeal. Make your plate look like a rainbow and let antioxidants go to work for you!

Source: <https://chhs.source.colostate.edu/>, Kendall Reagan Nutrition Center, Wdowik Nutrition Column: "Antioxidants go to battle for your body," Melissa Wdowik,



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## **Boost Your Retirement Finances in 2019**

**Contribute \$500 more to your 401(k).** The tax deferred contribution limit for 401(k) plans increases by \$500 to \$19,000 in 2019. Take action to increase the contribution to your retirement account, and the rest is automated. The 401(k) catch-up contribution limit for those age 50 and older is an additional \$6,000 – so up to \$25,000 in a 401(k) plan in 2019.



**Put an extra \$500 in an IRA.** The IRA contribution limit also increases by \$500 to \$6,000 in 2019. In the 24 percent tax bracket, this could reduce the tax bill by \$1,140. Workers age 50 and older can make catch-up contributions up to an additional \$1,000, for a maximum of \$7,000. If you can't max out, save what you can and increase it over time. IRA contributions aren't due until your tax filing deadline in April, so make a deposit shortly before filing your taxes.

**Get a 401(k) match.** A [401\(k\) match](#) is the fastest way to build your retirement account balance. If your employer will match funds, deposit as much in your 401(k) account as you can to maximize the match. This is an immediate and guaranteed 100 percent return on that money. Don't leave money behind by leaving a job before you are fully vested and able to transfer all 401(k) funds.

**Set up tax-free retirement income with a Roth account.** An after-tax contribution to a Roth 401(k) or [Roth IRA](#) allows you to earn tax-free investment growth and tax-free withdrawals in retirement. While you don't get a tax break in the year you make a Roth account contribution, the benefits of a Roth IRA or 401(k) accumulate over time, and they reduce your tax bill in retirement.

**Monitor your My Social Security account.** If you no longer receive a paper Social Security statement in the mail, you can check your Social Security statement online by logging into your [my Social Security account](#). View your statement annually with your tax return handy to make sure you are getting credit for the money you are paying into the program.

**Do you qualify for the saver's credit?** If you save for retirement in a 401(k) or IRA and earn less than \$32,000 as an individual or \$64,000 as a married couple, you may qualify to claim the [saver's tax credit](#). The saver's credit is worth between 10 to 50 percent of your retirement account contributions up to \$2,000 for individuals and \$4,000 for couples, and can be claimed in addition to the tax deduction on a traditional retirement account contribution.

Adapted from: <https://money.usnews.com/money/retirement/401ks/articles/10-ways-to-improve-your-retirement-finances-in-2019>



## **Sleep Secrets**

It's not always obvious when a mattress has outlived its usefulness. Some telltale clues:

- Lumps, deep indentations or sags can happen over time causing you to roll to the center.
- Foam degrades over time; and water may cause damage to the adhesive between foam layers, causing them to shift.
- Waking up sore. Worn-out mattresses no longer support your spine's natural curve, causing stress to other parts of your body as you sleep.
- Mattress compression leaves you feeling the foundation or bed slats beneath the mattress.
- Springs are poking you in spots of extreme wear.

Rotate your mattress at least twice a year to prevent excessive wear and extend the life of the mattress. Mattress toppers offer little relief. *Consumer Reports*, March 2019, has reviewed 32 major retailers.

## Ways to Be Kind Without Spending a Dime

Do you love giving, but are committed to staying out of debt? There are plenty of ways to be kind without ever opening up your wallet. One of the best things you can give anytime or for any occasion is kindness. Here are some simple ways to be kind and brighten someone's day:

**Smile more.** One of the easiest ways to be kind is to give someone a genuine smile. You never know what people are going through. Your smile could be the kindest thing they see all day.

**Listen without distractions.** Give your undivided attention to those around you. Put down your phone, mute the TV, and give folks some good old-fashioned eye contact. Make a conscious effort not to interrupt people when they're talking. Let them finish what they're saying before you respond. This simple practice signals you value the person speaking; and you don't even have to say a word.

**Include someone new.** We all have our go-to people when we're hosting a cookout or heading out to lunch. Be conscious of new people at work, church or in the neighborhood. Maybe it's been a long time since you were the new person. Add someone to your guest list and you might just make a new friend!

**Send a handwritten note or email.** Thank-you cards are great, but it's so unexpected to send a note to someone who's impacted your life. Maybe it's a parent, pastor, sibling, neighbor, teacher or friend. Whomever it is, let them know how much they mean to you. Don't assume they already know!

**Recreate a special day.** Think of a day or event in your life that meant a lot to you and a close friend or family member. Find little ways to share that memory with them. Recreate the memories and sentiment with photos, music and stories. They'll be touched by your effort, and you'll both have a great, *new* memory to share.

**Look for common ground.** All of us know people who disagree with us on just about everything. Instead of dreading another conversation with them, try seeing things from their point of view. Look for things you have in common. You don't have to become best friends, but keep your cool and keep it friendly.

**Affirm someone.** In a meeting or on an email chain, uplift the ideas of others. Recognize the good ideas and actions of others in front of everyone! Be kind by encouraging them among peers. This gives a self-esteem boost and brings out the best thoughts and deeds of others.

**Lend a hand.** Run an errand for someone who is busy. Pick up groceries for an elderly person if it's too cold for them to leave the house. Shovel a neighbor's driveway instead of just doing your own.

**Pay it forward.** It is usually picking up the check or paying for the person behind you at the drive-thru. You can still pay it forward without spending a single cent! Give away unused coupons to people in the grocery store. Give someone in line next to you your reward points. Let a person with a few items go in front of you at the checkout.

**Offer to babysit.** Everyone can use a break from time to time. Offer to babysit for a single parent so they can do their shopping. Bless a couple by watching their kids while they take a much needed date night.

**Share the wisdom you've learned.** Did you read a book that had significant meaning to you and shaped your life? Share that knowledge and wisdom with others! Give someone a copy of a book that means a lot to you. Why not pay it forward and gift the book to another person in your life who really needs it?

Practicing ways to be kind doesn't have to cost you any money at all, but it can multiply your happiness beyond measure. **The sooner you begin practicing how to be kind to yourself and others, the more joy you'll get out of everyday life.** And really, what better gift is there?

Adapted from <https://www.daveramsey.com>

## Asparagus: The Royal Vegetable



Spring is asparagus season, most commonly starting in April and ending in June. While we may enjoy asparagus all year long, it is most delicious and nutritious when eaten in season. Americans may appreciate the vegetable, but the love for this vegetable shines in Europe, especially in Germany, where it is often referred to as the “royal vegetable” or “king of vegetables.” Each year during asparagus season, or *Spargelzeit*, many Germans enjoy seasonal meals such as asparagus soup or a simple meal of potatoes and asparagus served with melted butter or hollandaise sauce. People drive

from miles around to buy freshly-harvested asparagus from local farms or celebrate at local asparagus festivals.

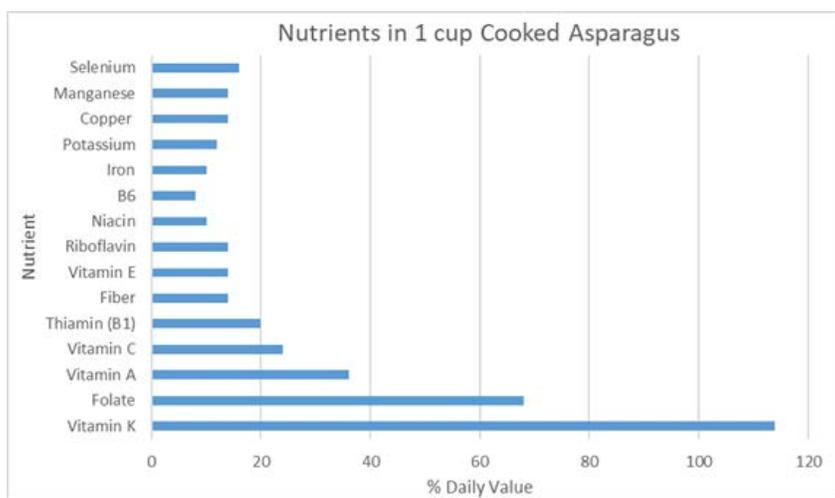
Native to the Eastern Mediterranean region, asparagus has been cultivated for at least 2,000 years. It is one of the few vegetables that is a perennial, which means it does not need to be planted each year—the plants live around 15 years or more. Unlike the familiar green asparagus, white spears are the most prized type in many other countries, including Germany. They are white because they are kept buried under the soil, where the lack of sunlight prevents them from turning green. This makes them more tender and sweeter. There are also varieties with a purple tint, which fades to green when cooked.

Asparagus is not only delicious, but also very nutrient-dense. Nutrient density refers to the amount of vitamins, minerals, and fiber as compared to the amount of calories. A cup of asparagus is only about 40 calories, and is an excellent source of many essential nutrients such as vitamin K, folate, vitamin A, vitamin C, and thiamin. It is also a good source of vitamin E, riboflavin, niacin, B6, iron, potassium, copper, manganese, selenium, and fiber. Additionally, asparagus contains a specific fiber called inulin, which has prebiotic properties helping to feed gut microbes, and has been studied for beneficial impacts on the gut microbiome.

Like most vegetables, asparagus is a great source of phytonutrients, which have a range of benefits. For example, asparagus contains quercetin, linked to reduced cardiovascular disease, and saponins, which may positively impact cardiovascular health, immune function, and cancer risk. Glutathione, known as the body’s “master antioxidant, is also present in asparagus and vital for the immune system and protecting cells from oxidative damage.

For storage and preparation information visit the LiveEatPlay website below.

Source: <http://www.liveeatplay.colostate.edu/features/news-1805.php#.XHWBsrh7m70>



## Growing Food and Growing Gardeners

Kids are natural-born gardeners. They are more than willing to get wet and dirty; their fingers are just the right size for poking holes in the soil to plant seeds; and they delight in the magic of watching a plant grow into food they can harvest and eat. It doesn't take much to nurture this childhood excitement.

**No space?** Even a few parsley seeds in a cup of potting soil on your windowsill can capture the attention of your child. If you keep the soil evenly moist, you will see the seeds start to sprout in a few days. Once your seedlings are large enough, you can transplant them to a pot or outdoors or add a garnish to dinner.

In a sunny spot outside, plant a container or two with vegetables and herbs. Don't need a fancy pot—just about any container will do as long as it has a drainage hole and hasn't previously held toxic materials - since you will be growing plants to eat. Use good quality potting soil and check your pots often to make sure they don't dry out. In the heat of the summer this can mean watering once or twice a day—a great job for your young gardener. Fertilizing on a regular basis will ensure your container plants get the proper nutrients for a successful harvest. Don't be surprised if your yields are not very high. There could be a large portion of the harvest going directly from plant to mouth!

Many edible plants can be grown in containers. If you have space for a one-gallon container, you can try some herbs and radishes. A three-gallon container is ideal for carrots and lettuce, and a container at least 5 gallons will allow tomatoes, peppers or beans to flourish.

**Your kid doesn't like vegetables?** Growing and harvesting their own vegetables encourages kids to try different foods. Let your children help you select seeds or plants that appeal to them. Involve them in the planting process. If space is available, consider giving them their own pot or corner of the garden. Remember the "wow" factor: kids delight in yanking out a plant and discovering a bright radish or crisp carrot has been growing under the soil. Plants in different colors such as purple beans or cherry tomatoes in shades of yellow and orange will also amuse young gardeners.

**When should you plant?** All plants for the vegetable garden can be divided roughly into two categories: cool season crops and warm season crops. Cool season crops go in the ground earlier in the spring when the nights are still cool and occasionally frosty. These are plants like snap peas, lettuces, radishes, carrots and beets. Warm season crops go in the ground after the risk of frost has diminished. These are plants like tomatoes, beans, cucumbers, summer squash and pumpkins.



In Eastern Colorado, there is only a minimal chance of the temperatures dropping below 32 degrees after May 16, so you should be safe planting your warm season crops after this date (though yield may be better if you wait until Memorial Day). You will often be able to find both cool and warm season plants for sale in the early spring. Beware of putting out the warm season crops too early—one hard frost can turn your beautiful basil plant to mush and a few days of cool daytime weather can stunt your tomato crop.

While you are waiting for your plants to grow large enough to harvest, check out gardening books from the library. One great book for young children is *Growing Vegetable Soup* by Lois Ehlert. A hilarious read for older children is *Tops and Bottoms* by Janet Stevens, a Colorado author. And, finally, anyone who has rabbits in their yard will appreciate *Muncha! Muncha! Muncha!* by Candace Fleming.

For more Yard and Garden information: <https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/yard-garden/>

## Program Highlights

**Congratulations to Tara & Cody Fundus** on the birth of a new baby girl, **Faye** on February 13<sup>th</sup>. She is welcomed into their family by older siblings: **Abel, Mya** and **Olive**.



### **Healthier Weigh 2019 – Trek to the Summit!**

The 2019 "A Healthier Weigh" challenge began in early January in six northeast Colorado counties and Bent County in SE Colorado – with a **total of 176 participants**. The AHW challenge encourages increasing activity, making wise food choices, and living a healthier lifestyle in 2019. The annual 12-week Health and Fitness Challenge will be completed around April 1<sup>st</sup> with the same staggered timeline at the weigh-outs.

#### **Ongoing Programs:**

**Strong People:** Tuesdays and Thursdays through March 28, 1:00 – 2:00 pm, Idalia, St John's Church; and Monday & Friday, 9 a.m. at Pioneer Haven, Akron

**Kid Phit:** For youth Kindergarten – 4<sup>th</sup> grades, Tuesdays from 4:00 – 5:30 pm through April 9, WRAC, Wray

**MyPhit:** For youth 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grades, Wednesdays from 3:45 – 5:15 pm through April 3<sup>rd</sup>, WRAC, Wray

**Integrated Nutrition Education Program:** March 8, March 13, April 3, April 10, May 1 & May 8, Wray Elementary School, Wray

**Yuma County Head Start Nutrition:** March 28, April 17 & May 16, 8:00 – 9:00 am, Wray Elementary School, Wray

## Upcoming Events!



**Diabetes Webinar:** April 19, noon – 1:00 pm: Dr. Barry Braun, PhD., Colorado State University, Professor, Department Head of Health & Exercise Science & Executive Director of Human Performance Clinical Research Laboratory & Kimberly Burke, MS, Colorado State University, Adult Fitness Program Director, Instructor, Department of Health & Exercise Science will be presenting on **Diabetes and Physical Activity**.

**Fast & Fabulous: Creating Healthy Meals in a Hurry:** March 21, 28, April 4 & 11 – 5:30 – 7:00 pm, Wray City Hall, \$20 registration fee. Preregistration required by March 18. Minimum of 10 registrations required to hold the class. Contact the Yuma County Extension Office at 332-4151 to register or for more information.

**FCS Spring Fling:** April 17, 5:30 pm, Wray City Hall, Wray

**ServSafe Food Handlers' Training:** April 16, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm, Morgan County Fairgrounds, Brush Register with the Yuma County Extension Office, 970-332-4151.

**ServSafe Food Managers' Training:** June 5, 8:00 am – 5:30 pm, Logan County Extension Office, Sterling Register with the Yuma County Extension Office, 970-332-4151.

