Be Energy Wise…Conserve At Home

In the last few years, the cost to heat and cool our homes has increased and pinched many North Carolina families’ wallets while straining the family budget. According to the U. S. Department of Energy the average American family will spend $1,300.00 “conservatively” a year on their utility bill. What can a family do to help ease their budget constraints? There are many things that families can do that cost little and yield long-term financial rewards. The key is a lifestyle change and to be conscious of energy consumption. Below are a few energy conservation tips that you can apply to your home at low/no cost today while yielding financial results tomorrow. You can find other tips at http://www.eere.energy.gov/energysavers/.

In the Kitchen

• Clean the coils under the refrigerator twice a year. All you need for this job is a vacuum, a flashlight, and a refrigerator brush.
• Try to keep the refrigerator door open no longer than necessary. Be sure to close the door when you’re through.
• Run the dishwasher only when it’s fully loaded.
• Check the owner’s manual to learn about special energy-saving features that your dishwasher or refrigerator may have.
• Use kitchen, bath and other ventilating fans wisely.

Heating and Cooling

• Use a programmable thermostat to help adjust temperatures (either up or down) when you are away from home or sleeping.
• For central air conditioning systems, keep the fan switch on your thermostat in the “auto” position when cooling/heating. Having the fan switch “on” continuously, can cost up to $25 extra a month on your electric bill.
• Replace your air filters as they become dirty.

Continued on the next page…
• Be certain furniture or other items do not block the return air grill inside your house.
• Use a ceiling fan or a portable fan to supplement your air conditioning. A fan can make you feel three or four degrees cooler.
• Use shades or drapes to block the hot sun.

• **DO NOT** close your air vents or block them to reduce the air going into a room.

Why? Because it is designed to run with all vents open and closing may be harmful to your system.

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**Building Strong Families**

**Sharing Memories…A Great Activity For Parents - A Treasured Gift For Other Relatives**

Remember the baby book you kept when your child or grandchild was an infant? Maybe it’s tucked away on the shelf in a closet or in a drawer. Wherever it is, take it out. It will provide many hours of sharing, learning and fun for you and your child.

A memory book is a particularly great resource for any special time you set aside to spend with your child, such as a rainy day or a story at bedtime. As he/she grows older, he/she will delight in hearing stories about himself/herself at a time he/she can’t remember.

If you never kept a baby book for your child, or if it’s been a long time since you added any material, now is a good time to start a current book for your child. Here are some of the things you could include.

1. **Photographs.** Take pictures – eating; sleeping; having fun with friends and family; enjoying favorite activities such as playing with special toys. Be sure to label the back of each photo with a short description and date.

2. **Artistic creations.** Keep samples of your child’s artwork in the memory book. Save early scribbles as well as work with finger paints, crayons, water colors, collages, self-portraits and treasured colorings. You don’t need to save everything. Have the child help you choose a few favorites. Remember to date them.

3. **Physical measures.** Make a growth chart marked off in inches. Every few months, measure your child and make a notation on the chart of the date on which that height was reached. Alongside make a note of the weight on that date if you have access to a scale.

4. **Stories and songs.** Write down stories that your child makes up, songs he/she composes, interesting or funny things he/she says, insights he/she has about life and people. Include some favorite stories or songs. What about writing down stories about your memories of his/her childhood? Children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews love to hear them over and over again! It says, “I Am Important!”

5. **Voice recordings.** If you have a cassette tape recorder, or can borrow one, make a sound recording of his/her voice. Record him/her singing, telling a favorite story, or talking on the telephone.

6. **Video recordings.** If you own a video camera, or have access to one, use it to record special events such as holidays, birthdays, and other significant happenings.

In the rush and scurry of busy families, what more wonderful gift could be given by a grandparent, aunt, uncle or special relative than one-on-one time creating, sharing and saving these memories together.

Take time to create a memory with a special child. Give the gift of a lifetime!

*Adapted from “Growing Together”*
Is It Still Safe To Eat Chicken?

The Asian strain of the Avian (Bird) Flu showed up on the world scene about eight years ago in Southeast Asia. It causes high mortality and sickness in domestic poultry. This Asian strain of the Bird Flu can also cause sickness and death when people come into close contact with sick or dying domestic poultry. So far, out of the less than 130 documented cases worldwide, there has only been one known case where this strain of the Asian bird flu virus was transmitted from one person to another person. To date there have been less than 70 deaths associated with this Asian Bird Flu virus.

This Asian Bird Flu is still considered by most specialists to be a Foreign Animal Disease, i.e. it is transmitted from one bird to another bird via respiratory secretions. So far, it has been very hard for this virus to mutate into a virus that can be transmitted from person to person. An interesting point to also note is that there has never been a documented case of a person getting the Avian Flu from eating properly cooked meat or eggs, even from affected flocks in Asia.

The natural reservoir for this Asian Bird Flu virus is migratory waterfowl found in Europe and/or Africa. So far, there has NOT been one documented case of the Asian Bird Flu found on the South or North American Continents in wild or domestic bird populations.

Most specialists agree that in order for this disease to be spread into the US it would probably be brought in by illegal shipments of domestic poultry from Southeast Asia or migratory waterfowl could bring it to our shores. This strain of virus will not originate in our local domestic poultry flocks.

The US population most at risk of contracting and spreading this disease are military and civilian travelers that have been in Asia, certain parts of Russia, and China and been exposed to sick or dying domestic birds. Travelers need to contact their County Health Departments if they have flu like symptoms, i.e. runny nose, eyes, and respiratory system congestion if they have been in Asia during the last 3 weeks.

The viral strains of bird flu found in the US only affect other birds. There has been no human deaths or sickness associated with viral strains of the bird flu found in the US. However, our North Carolina Department of Agriculture Veterinary Division blood tests over 200,000 birds per year to test for several contagious bird diseases, the bird flu being only being one example of a contagious bird disease. If the birds are found to have the bird flu, the flock is quarantined and disposed of in a safe and timely manner.

Our US commercial poultry industry is relatively safe from the Asian Flu because most of our birds are raised in houses and do not have contact with migratory waterfowl. Backyard flocks are more at risk than domestic commercial flocks because they are raised outside and can come in contact with migratory waterfowl. Small flock owners should limit human traffic to where the birds are kept and limit their bird’s access to farm ponds where migratory waterfowl congregate. Also, small flock owners should try to discourage over-wintering of migratory waterfowl. If their domestic birds show signs of sickness, they can send their birds to Rawlins Diagnostic lab in Raleigh to diagnose the causes of sickness. Small flock owners can make sure they keep their domestic birds on their own property. When they buy birds, they should get them from health certified hatcheries and only buy birds that are accompanied by a health certificate. Our US and North Carolina poultry products are safe to eat when properly cooked.

Submitted by Dan Campeau, NC Cooperative Extension Area Poultry Agent
PREPARE CHICKEN SAFELY…

When preparing chicken, practice the following four-food safety handling tips, which are:

1. **Clean** - Wash hands, utensils, equipment, and work surfaces thoroughly with hot, soapy water for at least 20 seconds before and after coming into contact with meat.

2. **Separate** - Don’t cross contaminate cooked foods with uncooked foods. Keep raw foods separate from cooked foods and make sure you clean utensils used for raw foods before they are used for cooked foods.

3. **Cook** - Cook meat to proper temperature, poultry pieces are cooked at 170 degrees and a whole chicken is cooked at 180 degrees.

4. **Chill** - Make sure you refrigerate leftover poultry immediately after serving to keep bacteria from growing.

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**How Do I Pack A Safe And Nutritious Lunch?**

It’s 7:45 AM and you have fifteen minutes to get the kids to school and yourself to work. It’s tempting to toss a soft drink and a bag of potato chips in your child’s lunch box. With a little planning, you can make sure that your child’s lunch is healthy and safe.

Food safety is particularly important in packing a bag lunch because food kept at room temperature provides a perfect place for bacteria to grow. Often children come home from school with a “bug,” the cause may well be food poisoning from a bag lunch. The key to packing a safe lunch is careful and sanitary food preparation.

**Always keep it clean.** Make sure your hands, food preparation surfaces and utensils are clean. Use hot water and soap to wash your hands for 20 seconds. Also, wash fruits and vegetables before packing them.

**Keep hot foods hot.** Be sure to keep hot foods such as soup, chili, or stew hot by using an insulated bottle. Fill the bottle with boiling water and let it stand for a few minutes. Empty the bottle and then fill it piping hot food. Keep the bottle closed until lunchtime.

**Keep cold foods cold.** Cold food should stay cold. You may wish to purchase in a freezer gel pack and an insulated lunch box. Freezer gel packs will keep foods cold until lunchtime, but are not recommended for all day storage. You can freeze single-sized juice packs overnight and place the frozen drink in your lunch box. The juice will thaw by lunchtime, but it will still be cold. The frozen drink will also keep the rest of the lunch cold. If you make sandwiches the night before, keep them in the refrigerator until packing them in the morning.

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*In addition to a safe lunch, pack a healthy lunch* by including a variety of foods from the five food groups – grains, vegetables, fruits, milk, and meat.
Five Food Groups

- Grains – whole grain bread, raisin bread, crackers,
- Vegetables – celery strips, baby carrots, red bell pepper strips, broccoli florets
- Fruits – pineapple tidbits, orange wedges, apple, fruit cups, dried fruit, 100% fruit juices
- Milk – yogurt, milk, cheese,
- Meat/Protein – turkey, ham, peanut butter
- Water
- Other ideas…
  - Peanut butter on graham crackers
  - Turkey and cheese sandwich
  - Include a low-fat dip for raw vegetables
  - Ham and cheese strips

Snack Mix

**Ingredients:**
- 2 cups cereal
- 1 cup raisins
- 1 cup nuts
- 1 cup dates or other dried fruit

**Instructions:**
1. Pour all ingredients in a large mixing bowl.
2. Cover and shake until all ingredients are mixed.

Become More Healthy in the Foods You Eat…Trans Fat

**Why worry about trans fat?**
Eating too much *trans* fat raises the level of bad cholesterol (LDL) in your blood and may reduce your good cholesterol (HDL) level. This puts you at greater risk of heart attack or stroke. To address this issue, the Food and Drug Administration has required labeling of *trans* fat contents in processed foods. Many manufacturers are reducing the *trans* fat in products. It is recommended that you keep your intake of *trans* as low as possible. Look for foods that contain 0g *trans* fat.

**What are trans fats?**
The fat in food is slightly altered as a result of the process of hydrogenation of oils and fats. These altered fats are called *trans* fats. The amount of *trans* fats formed depends on the amount of hydrogenation.
**What foods contain trans fats?**

Check the Nutrition Facts food label to see if *trans* fat is listed with its amount present. If there is no amount of *trans* fat shown on the Nutrition Facts food label, there still can be a small amount present. Check the ingredient list for terms that indicate the presence of *trans* fat. They include terms like *hydrogenated oil*, *partially hydrogenated oil*, and *vegetable oil shortening*.

- *Trans* fats are often found in foods with saturated fats, including vegetable shortening, some margarines, crackers, candies, cookies, snack foods, fried foods, baked goods, salad dressings, and other processed foods like pizza, fried chicken, spring rolls, buttered popcorn, fruit roll-ups, and chips. In fact margarine is a major source with stick margarine generally higher than tub margarine. For example, some stick margarines provide 2.5 grams per serving while some tub margarines have none.

- *Trans* fats are found in the oils widely used in restaurants for frying a variety of foods, including donuts, French fries, onions, and breaded fish. They do not have to provide nutrition labels. You can ask if *trans* fats were used in preparing the food; however knowing that won’t tell you how much is in your food.

- *Trans* fats also are found in desserts like cakes, danishes, and pies. *Trans* fats occur naturally (without hydrogenation) but in a very small amount in milk, beef, and other foods. It would take many pounds of beef to get the amount of *trans* fat that can be found in one serving of some manufactured products.

- *Trans* fats are not naturally found in fruits and vegetables. So eat more of these.

To lower your risk for heart disease, eat fewer foods containing saturated fats, *trans* fats, and cholesterol. Some foods that have 0 grams of *trans* fat per serving on their Nutrition Facts label may contain high amounts of fat, saturated fat, and/or cholesterol. So be sure to read the label for all of these ingredients.

It is especially important to read labels so you can: **Eat as Little Trans Fat as Possible!**

*Source: N. C. Cooperative Extension*

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