

It's scary time for healthy diets



Erin Harrel
of Cape Coral is
the mother of
three children.



The time is here — chocolate, apples or candy treats? The choices are always so difficult around Halloween. But after almost a year of the Family Health Challenge, I actually tend to lean toward the fruit.

When I am tempted by the candy bar, it is not without a quick scan of the calories, carbs and fat. After the sneak preview of what I am about to ingest,

I get a bite or two in before the guilt overwhelms me and I have to throw it away. It's just not worth eating when I know it is going to take a week or two to get rid of the two pounds it adds to my waistline.

I will confess this health challenge has not been an easy ride. I really expected the weight to just fall off. It hasn't! The weight loss has been slow, a pound

here or there. At first it was depressing, but I have learned something much greater than just losing weight.

Throughout this challenge, sponsored by The Omni Club and Lee Center for Weight Management, I have learned how to count calories (not that I do it every day, but I do know how now), how to read labels and the importance of exercise. I have even learned what vitamins and minerals our bodies need and what food sources contain them.

For example, Niacin (B3) is found in peanuts,


green peas, salmon and soybeans, and it's involved in 200 different chemical reactions for energy production. Who couldn't use a little extra energy in their day? Riboflavin (B2), found in cottage cheese, asparagus, okra, yogurt, meat, eggs and fish, is necessary for the release of energy from carbs and helps protect the nervous system and mucous membrane in the respiratory tract. With three kids and a dissertation in the works as part of my doctoral degree, I need all the help I can get when it comes to my nervous system. ➤

a mother's view



While I have known since childhood the importance of eating a well-balanced meal, I truly never realized the role of healthy foods and exercise in our lives. Sure we eat whole grains because that's what we're suppose to do, but I had no idea packing in the fruits and veggies could do so much for our energy levels and mental stability. Don't get me wrong — I still feel like a crazy lady most days. But at least I can keep up with the kids now. Furthermore, I sleep better at night and find that I am generally happier than I was before I started this rigorous exercise and nutrition counseling.

Even the kids have noticed a huge change. I have made a concerted effort to skip the drive-thrus for home-cooked nutritious meals. It's nice to sit down together and enjoy a warm healthy meal. At first, the kids protested having veggies with every meal and fruit for dessert, but now they ask for them when I don't serve them. We have found fun ways to incorporate their fruits and veggies, too. Riley and Jude, along with their friends Sydney Brode and Joseph Mirando, enjoy devouring strawberry smoothies dolled up with umbrella straws and whipped cream rather than half and half, ice cream or sugar.

All in all, learning to eat healthier and exercise regularly has benefited the entire family. I have high hopes with only two months to go until the New Year that I will be able to lose another 15 to 20 pounds and come close to my goal weight. I'll keep you posted! 




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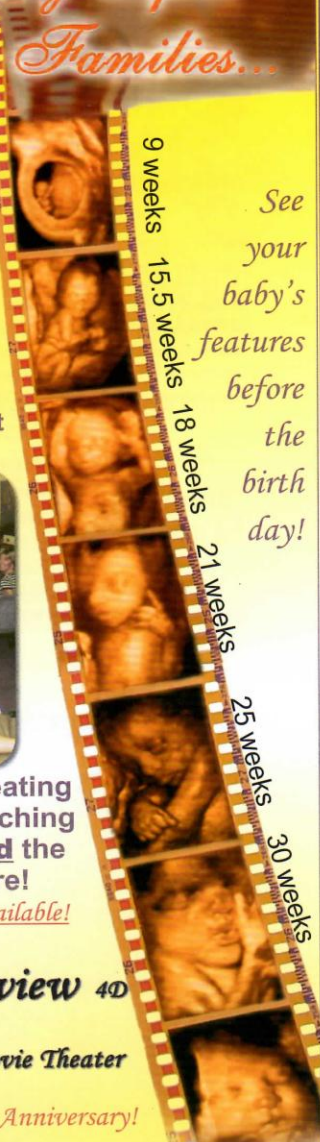
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