



**Yakima Valley
Farm Workers Clinic**

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oregon WIC Program Encourages Simple Steps Towards Better Health

MCMINNVILLE, OR – March was National Nutrition Month, but the USDA’s Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) encourages families to think about nutrition year-round. Cat Larrouy, Registered Dietitian & Nutrition Supervisor for McMinnville Oregon WIC Program, overseen by Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic, believes nutrition should be a year-round focus. She encourages those who are looking for ways to improve their health to do so in small steps.

“Any attempt to improve our health and nutrition should be small, incremental, simple things that fit well with your lifestyle and your family’s lifestyle,” said Larrouy who emphasized that this tactic helps makes progress easier to maintain long-term.

One of the easiest ways to improve your health is to increase your consumption of fruits and vegetables. Unfortunately, fresh fruits and vegetables can be expensive, and, in some geographically isolated areas, hard to come by. In those cases, frozen or canned fruits and vegetables can be a great alternative, and occasionally a better value.

“I like to remind families that sometimes the fresh option isn’t even going to have the most bang for your buck,” said Larrouy. “Frozen options can be a beautiful way to not only get that maximum nutrient content, but also something that will stay good in your refrigerator for a long time. You don’t have to scramble to use it before it goes bad.”

Canned fruits and vegetables are also a good option because they are usually inexpensive and have a long shelf life. In addition, you want choose vegetables canned in water and look for light salt versions. Look for canned fruit packed in natural juice or light syrup. The

goal is to find foods that have the fewest added ingredients and avoid ones that undergo a lot of processing.

“Ultra-processed food items are usually going to have less vitamins, minerals, and important nutrients in them by the time they become what they are going to become,” said Larrouy. “The more processes those go through, the more nutrients that food can lose. They have things like added sugars, added salt, and added fat. Those are all things that we like to keep to a minimum in our diet.”

The object is to make better food choices, but you don’t have to completely eliminate things you love.

“Every food item, honestly, can be pretty safe and good for us for a lot of reasons in moderation,” said Larrouy. “There’s room for all foods in our diet. Everybody deserves a treat, and so, we don’t like to say those are “no, no, foods” but rather they are “sometimes foods.””

Ultimately, the closer a food is to its original form, a whole piece of fruit or a whole grain for example, the more nutrients are going to be in it.

Not everyone grew up in a home where cooking from scratch was the norm, and cooking food you are not familiar with can be intimidating. Larrouy recommend the website Foodhero.org, managed by Oregon State University. The website offers information on budgeting, recipes, meal planning, and growing your own food. They even have a library of informational videos on various food related subjects.

“It has a ton of information, a huge database, of beautifully healthy recipes with a wide variety of ingredients,” said Larrouy. “You can search by ingredient. You can even search by the ingredient you want to eliminate from your diet.”

Larrouy also suggested talking to your health care provider to find out if they offer healthy cooking classes or know of local organizations that do. This is a service Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic offers to their patients and WIC clients

“There are quite a few really cool resources here in the Oregon area, we have a few local clinics that offer teaching kitchen courses,” said Larrouy. “The Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic network runs teaching kitchens at multiple clinic sites. There’s one in Portland, one in Woodburn, and one in Salem.”

The teaching kitchens offer courses about cooking from scratch, basic cooking, kitchen etiquette, how to use different tools, and how to measure and weigh things. They also gear classes towards patients with chronic diseases. This allows patients who have diabetes or heart disease, for example, learn to cook in a way that reduces ingredients that could aggravate their conditions.

Finally, Larrouy suggests finding time to exercise throughout the day.

“Our lives are set up to be very sedentary, and that’s kind of an up-hill battle for everybody,” said Larrouy. “Most of our jobs are sitting, and we are in our cars a lot, so we have to intentionally pause, multiple times a day, and give ourselves the time to get up and move. It can be taking a 15-minute walk every day. It could be just doing some gentle stretching. Getting up and moving your body when you realize you’ve been sitting for a couple of hours. Very, very, small kinds of movement, even very gentle movement, can absolutely make a big difference in your health journey.”

You don’t need to radically change your diet and lifestyle overnight, and it’s important to remember that everything, even processed foods, are fine in moderation. But, if you would like to start improving your overall nutrition and health, the information provided in this article can help move you toward your goal.

***Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic** is one of the Pacific Northwest's largest community health centers, providing medical, dental, behavioral health and social services to more than 195,000 people a year. With more than 50 unique service locations across Oregon (Clatsop, Marion, Multnomah, Umatilla, and Yamhill counties) and Washington (Benton, Franklin, Spokane, Walla Walla, and Yakima counties), we deliver affordable, comprehensive primary care for underserved populations in our communities. We also extend our network of care through our mobile health units and virtual visit technology, bringing essential care to our more remote patients. Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic employs over 1,800 staff in addition to our medical and dental residents, fellows, students, and volunteers. All of whom are dedicated to bringing quality care to those in our communities who need it most. Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization recognized by HRSA, The Joint Commission, and The National Committee for Quality Assurance for our accomplishments in community health care. For more information, please visit yfwc.com/press. Newsletter sign up at yfwc.com/newsletter.*

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