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STEPS TO A HEALTHIER YOU

Fact Sheet

Include Fiber-Rich Foods *for Healthier School Meals*

KEY ISSUES:

- **Most Americans eat only half the recommended amount of dietary fiber each day.**
- **Foods that are good sources of fiber, such as whole grains, dry beans, fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds, also tend to be rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.**
- **Eating more fiber-rich foods as part of a low-fat, low-cholesterol diet can help lower blood cholesterol, which reduces the risk of heart disease.**
- **The *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommend a dietary fiber intake of 14 grams per 1,000 calories per day. This translates to about 7-12 grams of fiber at lunch.**
- **Schools can help students get more fiber every day by offering more whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and dry beans and peas in their menus.**

Diets rich in foods containing fiber such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains may reduce the risk of heart disease. So, getting enough dietary fiber is important for lasting health benefits!

Help students choose fiber-rich fruits, whole grains, vegetables, and dry beans by gradually adding more of these foods to your menus. About 85 percent of dietary fiber comes from these sources, so you don't need to buy foods with added fiber to get the recommended amount each day. Compare Nutrition Facts labels for similar products and look for the amount of dietary fiber per serving. A "good source" of fiber provides between 3 and 5 grams per serving. A "high fiber" source contains 5 grams or more.

Easy ways to follow the *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*

Recipe for Success

- **Find creative ways to add more dry beans** to your menus. Thicken soups by adding pureed beans, sprinkle beans on salads, and consider adding beans to stews and spaghetti sauce. Or, choose main courses that showcase beans, such as tacos, chili, bean soup, and bean salads.
- **Replace high-fat ranch dips with hummus** (pureed garbanzo beans)! Serve hummus with fresh crisp vegetables such as carrots, broccoli, and cucumber sticks, or with whole-grain pita bread for a delicious high-fiber treat.
- **Be a "stealth health" promoter!** Boost the fiber in favorite entrées such as pizza by adding colorful vegetables on a whole-wheat pizza crust. Make the healthy choice an easy choice!
- **Top salads with dried fruits or nuts!** Toss them into coleslaw and lettuce mix.

USDA Commodity Food Program

Schools can order a variety of fiber-rich foods like canned dry beans (including pinto, black-eyed peas, refried and kidney beans), whole grains, and canned, fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables through the commodity program. Check the list of available foods at: www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/schcnp/.

- **Offer plenty of whole-grain breads**, pasta, and brown rice. Get unconventional with meatloaf or meat ball recipes...simply add oatmeal to increase fiber.
- **Serve fruits and vegetables with the peel** for extra fiber. Cutting the fruits and vegetables into smaller pieces will help younger students enjoy them.
- **Go for the Gold and take the Healthier US School Challenge!** Showcase your fiber-rich menus and offer plenty of whole fruit or veggies and whole grains every day. And be sure to include beans at least once per week!

Messages for Students

- Make a colorful parfait layered with fruit and low-fat yogurt topped with nuts or granola.
- Try whole-grain pita bread with hummus or bean dip!
- Start your day with a heart-healthy breakfast! Try hot or cold whole-grain cereals topped with fruit such as bananas, blueberries, strawberries, raisins, or dried cranberries.

Fiber Facts: Which Should I Choose?

3.73 grams	1 medium whole apple with peel
2.09 grams	1 medium whole apple without peel
1.50 grams	1/2 cup applesauce
.25 grams	1 cup apple juice

(Source: USDA Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 14)

Did You Know?

Fiber helps us feel full without adding calories, so it may help people control the amount of food they eat to lose weight or or maintain healthy weight.

For more information:

www.MyPyramid.gov

www.fns.usda.gov/tn/HealthierUS/index.html

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