TOMATOES – BRIGHT RED JEWELS OF SUMMERTIME

Tomatoes are a bumper crop this year. Visit the farmers market and you will see tables full of those bright red jewels of summertime. Imagine slicing one up and putting it on a sandwich. Or you might just wash and eat.

Tomatoes make our foods taste better, add color and texture to our meals, and are an added health benefit. They consist of a large number of antioxidants which fight different forms of cancer. The rich source of vitamins and minerals provide a protective effect against cardiovascular diseases, as well as improves eye health, prevents hypertension and urinary tract infections.

Tomatoes contain lycopene, an antioxidant highly effective in scavenging cancer-causing free radicals. This benefit extends even to the heat-processed products, which include ketchup.

The lycopene in tomato prevents serum lipid oxidation, thus exerting protective effects against cardiovascular diseases. Regular consumption of tomato has shown to decrease levels of LDL cholesterol and triglycerides in the blood. These lipids are the key culprits in cardiovascular diseases and lead to the deposit of fats in the blood vessels.

One single tomato can provide about 40 percent of the daily vitamin C requirement and a medium size has only 24 calories. They are high in potassium and other antioxidants and low in sodium, fat and calories.

To get all that goodness, choose tomatoes that are plump and heavy, with smooth skins. Skip those with bruises, blemishes or deep cracks. Depending upon the variety, ripe tomatoes are completely red or reddish orange to completely orange and give slightly to gentle palm pressure.

Do not refrigerate your tomatoes until they are ripe and mature. If they are still unripe or partially ripe, store them at a cool room temperature in a light-but not-sunny-area. They should not be refrigerated until they are mature. When they reach your favorite stage of ripeness, refrigerate them for no longer than 5 days. After that time, they begin to lose both texture and flavor.

There are more than 4,000 varieties of tomatoes to choose from, ranging from the small, marble-size cherry tomato to the giant Ponderosa that can weigh three pounds. Cherry, globe, and grape are wonderful in salads or eaten just out of hand. While the larger, Better Boy and Beef Steak tomatoes are most often used for sandwiches. If you are making salsa, plum and pear shaped varieties, such as Roma are the best choice due to their meatiness. The orange tomato is said to be lower in acid.
KEYS TO EMBRACING AGING

Physical Activity
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WHAT IS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY?
Physical activity includes any body movement that works your muscles and requires more energy than resting. Walking, gardening, pushing a stroller and climbing the stairs are just a few examples of physical activity that are low in intensity. Exercise is a type of physical activity that is planned and structured for an extended period of time. Exercise often includes more vigor or intensity such as weightlifting, aerobic activity and participating on a sports team.

WHY IS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY SO IMPORTANT?
• Strengthens bones and muscles
• Improves cardiovascular health
• Maintains or increases range of motion and flexibility
• Protects against certain health conditions, such as heart disease, stroke, hypertension, obesity, type 2 diabetes mellitus, osteoporosis, colon cancer and depression
• Improves mental health and mood
• Improves cognitive functioning
• Protects against dementia, including Alzheimer’s disease
• Improves quality of life and ability to do daily activities
• Controls weight
• Increases energy
• Promotes restful sleep
• Reduces the risk of falling
• Contributes to longevity

There are many types of exercise and physical activity. The following information provides various tips to encourage you to be active in ways that suit your lifestyle, interests, health and budget. Whether you’re just starting out, getting back to exercising after a break or fit enough to run a three-mile race, physical activity is for everyone, including people who are healthy and those who live with ongoing health problems or disability.

TYPES OF EXERCISE
Regardless of your age, weight or athletic ability, physical activity is good for you. In particular, longer, healthier lives are influenced by four main types of physical activity: aerobics, strength training, stretching and balance. Increasing the level of intensity of the exercise, as well as regular participation in all four types of exercises, are ideal for the full health benefits of physical activity.
**Aerobic activity** uses large muscle groups, can be maintained continuously and is rhythmic in nature. Walking, jogging, dancing and playing tennis are examples of aerobic exercise. Such activity is important because it improves the health of your heart, lungs and circulatory system, which can delay and prevent many chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes. Aerobic activity also improves stamina for daily activities.

When performing aerobic activity, there are three factors to keep in mind:

- **Intensity** – the strength and power you put into the activity
- **Frequency** – how often you participate in the activity
- **Duration** – the length of time you perform the activity at one time

**Frequency and Duration**
While the minimum recommendation for adult aerobic activity is 150 minutes a week, for added health benefits, adults should ultimately strive to achieve 300 minutes of exercise per week. Aerobic activity should take place *most* days of the week for at least 10 minutes at a time to add up to the recommended 150 minutes. For example, walking from the parking lot to the office or store does not count towards aerobic exercise unless it takes you 10 minutes and you were moving fast enough to meet and maintain your target heart rate. That walk to the store was good physical activity, but it was not exercise. (All physical activity is good, but we are talking about exercise.)

**Strength training** makes muscles and bones stronger. Such strength allows you to perform daily activities. Strength training also plays a key role in keeping obesity and diabetes at bay by increasing your metabolism, which helps you maintain a healthy weight and ideal blood sugar levels. Strength training can also help prevent the progression of osteoporosis (a disease that causes bones to become weak and brittle).

**Extension Get Fit**
Extension Get Fit is a community-based strength training program targeted to adult Arkansans. Based on research, the program is designed to increase strength and improve balance and flexibility. Why should you choose this strength training program? Extension Get Fit is safe, structured, affordable, and appropriate for all fitness levels. All of our classes provide a supportive group environment and its fun! This is a state-wide program so you can find it throughout Arkansas. In Boone County, there are several classes offered at different times, days, and locations so you can choose the class that is most convenient for you. New participants are welcome anytime but fall classes will be ready for new participants September 12 and 13th. The cost of the program is $12 per calendar year but scholarships are available if needed. Not sure if you will like it? Come try it out at no cost the first few times. For details on class options, contact the Boone County Extension Office at 741-6168.

**Fair Time Exhibits**
Volunteer at, come out and enjoy, or exhibit something at the fairs. The Boone County Educational Fair is September 13 – 17 and the Northwest Arkansas District Fair is September 18 – 25. Entries into the Boone County Fair will be accepted from 3:00–6:30 p.m. on September 13th. Entries in the Boone County Educational Fair will automatically be transferred into the district fair if not picked up on Saturday, September 17, between 2:00 and 3:00 p.m. only. All entries must be picked up on September 25th from 2:00-3:00 p.m. with no exceptions. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact the Extension office at 741-6168.

**Enter Your Quilt in the Fair!**
Are you thinking of entering a quilt in the county fair? Do you think it might be “blue ribbon” worthy? Here are some of the things judges consider when they evaluate a quilt:

**Appearance:** Is the entry “eye catching”; are the colors compatible? Is the quilt square; does it lie flat? Is there balance of color and design? Are the blocks identical in size? Is the sashing (strips between the blocks) even in width, and do they follow straight vertical and horizontal lines? Are the borders appropriate in color and width? Do they frame the body of the quilt? Is it clean; no pet hair or smoke smell?
**Lining (or backing):** Is the fabric appropriate? If the backing is pieced the seams should be straight. Backing fabric should not show through to the quilt top. The backing should lie flat—no pleats or puckers.

**Batting:** The batting should be evenly distributed throughout the quilt; it should come clear to the edge all around. Batting should not be evident; fibers should not migrate to the top (called “bearding”). One exception is crazy quilts and “rag” or denim quilts as they do not usually contain batting.

**Workmanship:** Are the stitches strong, close and tight without showing? Are the seams flat with no puckers? Is the piecing well done with sharp points and corners meeting? Dark fabrics should not show under lighter fabrics (shadowing). Applique pieces should lie flat, stitches even and close, thread not seen (except for machine applique or when it is a design element).

**Quilting:** Whether hand or machine quilted the stitches should be small, even and consistent. Lines should be straight, curves should be smooth. Knots or back stitches should not be visible; thread ends should be clipped close to fabric. Quilting patterns should complement the quilt design. The amount of quilting should be appropriate; not too much or too little. Tied quilts should be tied at regularly spaced intervals, and ties should be consistent in length of tails.

**Edge Finish:** Binding or other finish should be appropriate for the quilt design. Binding should be even in width, both top and bottom, and batting should fill the binding, clear to the edge. Curved edges should be nicely rounded, smooth and flat; straight edges should be very straight. Corners should not be distorted. Square corners should be mitered; all corners should be done the same. Stitches should be small, even and secure.

Be proud of your work and enter it in the local fair. You’ve done a lot of work, and everyone enjoys seeing the quilts, especially the judges.

- Boone County Quilters EHC

Sincerely,

Trudy G. McManus
County Extension Agent – Family and Consumer Science