

LIFELINE

St. Jude for Life



Winter 2018-19

Dear St. Jude Alumni,



The Winter holidays bring many opportunities for fun and friendship. They also provide plenty of chances to over-indulge in treats and lose track of health routines amid the increased stress of shopping, entertaining, and celebrating.

Maybe that is why the holidays are traditionally followed by the making of New Year's resolutions! Not surprisingly, resolutions to improve our personal habits often involve diet and exercise, since both are key to good health.

Practicing good health habits is especially important for childhood cancer survivors. As the St. Jude LIFE Study has shown, a number of treatments for childhood cancer are linked to increased risk of developing serious chronic conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, or heart disease. Eating a healthy diet, maintaining a healthy weight, and

being physically active are things we can control that may help reduce our risk of chronic disease. Unfortunately, making lifestyle changes can be hard for everyone.

Many factors influence whether a person can succeed in making positive changes. Persistence is an important ingredient in success. People who succeed at forming healthy habits have usually failed more than once in the past. Some people find success in *not* going it alone: If you have a life partner, you have probably noticed that healthy habits are easier to stick with when doing so is important to both of you!

Additionally, joining a group such as Weight Watchers or taking advantage of health coaching at work or a community center can often make it easier to stay motivated. A health coach is a health care professional who helps people gain a better understanding of their health and learn to make healthy choices to improve their wellbeing. They are knowledgeable about best health practices that can empower us to take charge of our own health.

In this issue of the LIFELINE we feature the amazing array of information on healthy eating and physical activity that is available online at ChooseMyPlate.gov. MyPlate resources are provided by the US Department of Agriculture. We hope this great site can be helpful for you when you are ready to renew your commitment to healthy habits or make some new ones.

All of us at the LIFE Study wish you a happy, and healthy, New Year.

To your health!

Melissa M. Hudson, MD

Principal Investigator, St. Jude Lifetime Cohort Study

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Home-cooking (and some planning ahead) keep you in control

Eating a healthy diet is one of the best ways to safeguard your health. Many childhood cancer treatments, such as steroids, break down muscle and convert it to fat. And they may make you *want* to overeat. For many survivors, fatigue can also be a side effect of treatment. "Because of this, eating right is especially important for survivors," says St. Jude nutritionist Karen Smith. "It takes effort to cook (or learn to cook) but it really is one of the best things you can do to help you achieve or maintain a healthy weight and protect yourself against chronic diseases."

Karen is a project manager with Clinical Nutrition Services at St. Jude. Nutrition Services offer a weekly cooking class for current St. Jude patients. The classes emphasize healthy choices made from scratch with fresh ingredients. While the class is geared toward patients on treatment, Karen says some alumni have also taken part. "Everyone is welcome. If you're on campus to attend ACT Clinic or for a LIFE Study evaluation, feel free to make the class a part of your day."

"We base everything on the **ChooseMyPlate** website of the US Department of Agriculture. (More information about this site is on the next page.) This great site helps us teach about healthy portion control, and the importance of low-fat, lower sodium, and high fiber food choices."

The ChooseMyPlate site contains hundreds of recipes and menus for easy, low-cost meals. For people who think they don't have time to cook from scratch, ChooseMyPlate also includes strategies for getting and keeping the home-cooking habit. For example, you can quickly put together a veggie omelet for breakfast if you take five minutes to cut vegetables the night before.

"With planning, meals cooked at home from scratch can be as quick to prepare as boxed or canned meals, or going out for take-out," Karen says. "Give it a month and try to cook almost all of your meals at home." Make it easy by planning meals in advance each week, shopping from a grocery list, and finding creative ways to use leftovers. Mastering the art of home-cooking can help you maintain your health and maybe even feel better about life!

Karen's nutrition suggestions for navigating through holiday celebrations and keeping your New Year's resolutions:



- Stick with your regular meal schedule during the holidays. If you skip a meal before a party you may be tempted to over-indulge in rich party treats.
- Plan menus ahead of time and allow yourself to pick your favorite foods in small portions.
- Plan time to be active every day to help you burn off extra calories. A 180 pound person can burn 100 calories by walking a mile. If you choose to eat a piece of pecan pie you could jog briskly for 48 minutes or if you eat a serving of candied sweet potatoes you could walk moderately for 60 minutes to burn off the extra calories.

Karen's top tip:

- Coaching can help you succeed.** Contact a registered dietitian for personalized help. If you need assistance with finding a local registered dietitian or have questions, feel free to email the St. Jude clinical nutrition program at

clinicalnutrition@stjude.org

ChooseMyPlate.gov is a website hosted by the US Department of Agriculture that can help you find your healthy eating style and build it throughout your lifetime. Everything you eat and drink matters. The right mix can help you be healthier now and in the future.

MyPlate offers ideas to help you make healthy choices that meet your individual needs. This site provides the information you need to:

- ❑ Focus on making healthy food and beverage choices from all five food groups including fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods, and dairy to get the nutrients you need.
- ❑ Calculate the right amount of calories for you based on your age, sex, height, weight, and physical activity level by using the MyPlate plan on the website under the **Resources** heading.

A healthier eating style and being conscious of portion sizes can help you avoid overweight and obesity and reduce your risk of diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

- ❑ Use Nutrition Facts labels and ingredient lists to find amounts of saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars in the foods and beverages you choose.

Eating fewer calories from foods high in saturated fat and added sugars can help you manage your calories and prevent overweight and obesity.

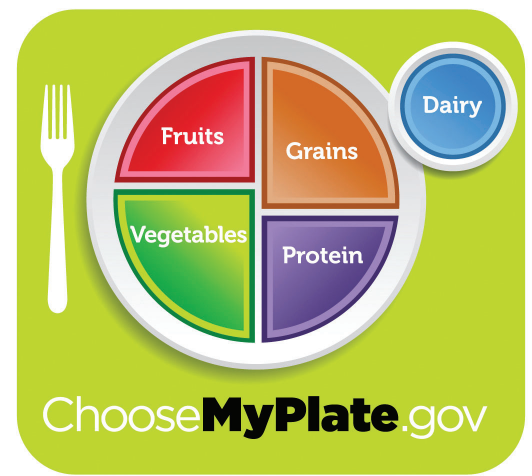
Eating foods with less sodium can reduce your risk of high blood pressure.

- ❑ Find interesting recipes and learn how to plan and prepare nutritious, low-cost meals and snacks by using the recipes and meals under the **Healthy Eating** heading.

Check out the 5 Ways Series (choosemyplate.gov/5-ways-series) to discover creative ways of using common ingredients to assemble tasty meals.

Get started on a healthier diet by making some small changes.

- ❑ Fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables: Focus on whole fruits rather than fruit juices.
- ❑ Vary your veggies: Occasionally choose something you haven't tried before.
- ❑ Make half your grains whole grains like brown rice, oats, grits, or whole wheat bread.
- ❑ Move to low-fat and fat-free dairy.
- ❑ Vary your protein routine: Try to include some non-meat protein choices like beans or even tofu!
- ❑ Learn how to eat and drink the right amount for you.



(Adapted from the ChooseMyPlate website)

Healthy diet AND physical activity AND a bag of chips?

Unfortunately not the bag of chips, at least not very often! However, a study conducted by researchers at Stanford University suggests that people are more likely to maintain long-term positive changes if they start improving their diet and increasing their physical activity at the same time.

The Stanford researchers assigned 200 study participants who wanted to improve their lifestyles to one of four groups:

- ❑ The first group received telephone coaching on diet first, followed by coaching about increasing their activity level.
- ❑ The second group received the coaching on activity first, followed by diet coaching.
- ❑ The third group received coaching on both diet and activity at the same time.
- ❑ A fourth group, the study controls, got 12 months of stress-reduction counseling.

The control group did not make any lifestyle changes. The diet-first group met the study diet goals but not the activity goals. The activity-first group met the study

activity goals but not the diet goals. The group who received simultaneous coaching on diet and activity met both goals.

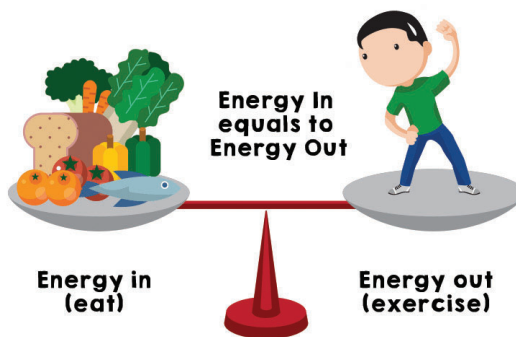


Image from <https://www.healthhub.sg>
(Singapore Ministry of Health)

The results of this study suggest that it may be easier to make changes in diet and activity at the same time. The authors speculate that improved diet and increased physical activity may reinforce each other since they both affect energy balance and appetite.

The study also demonstrates the value of coaching for people who are trying to make positive changes to their health habits.

REFERENCE: King AC, Castro CM, Buman MP, et al. Behavioral impacts of sequentially versus simultaneously delivered dietary plus physical activity interventions: the CALM trial. *Ann Behav Med.* 2013;46(2):157-68.



Staying active is key to maintaining your health. Even a little physical activity can help improve your physical and mental health, and 10 minutes at a time is a good place to start.

Don't let fatigue hold you back—remember, the treatment for fatigue is exercise!

-Dr. Kiri Ness

Kirsten K. Ness, PT, PhD, FAPTA, directs the Human Performance Lab at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital



Please stay in touch with us!

- Call us toll-free at: **1-800-775-2167**
- Send us an email: **sjlife@stjude.org**
- Visit our website: **www.stjude.org/sjlife**

Thank you!
for participating in survivor research