Dear Readers ~

1. I can hear a weed eater going outside my window.
2. The other night, I returned from a program in Delta Junction at 11 p.m. - in the daylight.
3. The mounds of trash covered by all the snow are now in plain sight.

These are three signs that mean spring has arrived here in the Interior of Alaska.

So advice for this month is to get out and garden, enjoy our long days, and join cleanup activities during the month of May.

Home Economist/4-H & Youth Development Agent

---

**Upcoming Dates:**

- June 6th - Pickles & Relishes (MFP Series)
- June 12th-14th - Dining with Diabetes class - call 474-2420 to register
- July 11th - Canning Fruits (MFP Series)
- August 3rd-11th - Tanana Valley State Fair
- September 5th - Canning Fish & Meat (MFP Series)
- October 3rd - Freezing & Drying (MFP Series)
- November 7th - Sausage & Jerky (MFP Series)

(Master Food Preservation (MFP) Series, 6-8 p.m., at the Food Bank, call 474-2420 to register)

---

**Gardening - a family activity**

Green thumb or not, gardening with kids typically combines healthy physical activity with learn-by-doing opportunities.

Children can learn from parents, grandparents, or neighbors who are avid gardeners and even from each other. And, if gardening is a new interest for the family, learning together can bring a family together.

Start slow. Taking children to a garden supply store can spark their interest, but allow plenty of time to look at seed packets, bedding or starter plants, and garden paraphernalia.

Such a shopping trip can prompt plans to expand the family garden. Bigger is not necessarily better. Start small, to keep the garden manageable - and fun, rather than a chore.

A small garden or even container gardening will typically allow opportunities to try new plants and seeds, yet not consume all of a family’s free time.

Kids can get pretty excited about picking out colorful packets of flower and vegetable seeds. Parents with small children should choose fast-growing spring crops - lettuce and radishes are examples - so children can watch early progress in the garden.

You might want to try cherry or grape tomato plants, which typically produce bumper crops of small fruit that is easy for children to harvest.

Planting melons, squash and pumpkins is fun too, but the promise of late summer and fall harvests may not hold a child’s interest as easily as some early crops.

Planting flowers such as daisies or zinnias that grow throughout the summer and are easily cut for summer bouquets, can brighten the family home and offer opportunities for children to share part of their garden with friends, neighbors, or grandparents.

Keeping a garden journal or notebook, with seed packets, a picture or two, planting dates and other comments such as a notation about the first harvest, also may bring the family together around the kitchen table and create a useful reference as well as a memory book.

Celebrating the first harvest - a salad with homegrown lettuce or early tomatoes - also can make a meal an event.

Gardening together can bring the family together. And, while some chores are more fun than others, children may view them as more of a treat if they get to stay up a little late to weed or are appointed superintendent of watering on a rotating basis.
Living with Diabetes - Take Care of Yourself

A diagnosis of diabetes is for life. But that diagnosis is easier to live with, thanks to blood glucose monitoring.

The most important thing to realize is we don’t have a cure for diabetes but we do have the means to stay healthy and still have diabetes. There is no magic cure.

The American Diabetes Association (http://www.diabetes.org/) defines diabetes as “a disease in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin ... (which) is a hormone that is needed to convert sugar, starches, and other food into energy needed for daily life.”

Basically, the association continued: “Diabetes means that your blood glucose (sugar) is too high. Your blood always has some glucose in it because the body needs glucose for energy to keep you going. Too much glucose in the blood is not good for your health.”

That’s where monitoring comes in. Blood glucose monitors require a tiny amount of blood and testing strips, but can give results instantly. Because we have the ability to check blood glucose and know what it is at any time, we can tell if a treatment plan is working or it’s not. And that can be a lifesaver.

The better control you have of your blood glucose, the healthier you will be even if you have diabetes.

The diabetes association recommends that blood glucose levels before meals are between 90 and 130 milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL) and no higher than 180 mg/dL when taken two hours after eating.

Keeping a careful watch over blood glucose levels can reduce or eliminate many of the expected complications of diabetes, including burning or tingling in the feet or problems with the eyes.

People believe that complications have to happen but they don’t. Because we know about testing blood glucose, people with diabetes now have the ability to avoid complications unless they happened before they knew they had diabetes.

Monitoring is one part of self-care for people with diabetes. The other steps are: eating the right amount of carbohydrate foods, being physically active and taking medications if prescribed.

Determining the right amount of carbohydrate foods isn’t always easy.

No food is off limits; you have to determine the amount of carbohydrate foods you can eat and balance that with physical activity and medicine, if needed. It’s not an exact science. Two people with diabetes may eat the same foods and one may have high blood glucose and the other may not. If you have type 2 diabetes and need help with your food choices, the best source of information is a registered dietician.

Physical activities can include walking for at least 30 minutes a day, doing chair exercises or water aerobics, swimming or bicycling. Jogging is not recommended because of potential damage to the joints and feet.

Diabetes is a ‘silent disease’, because people often don’t know they have it. Symptoms include fatigue, thirst, and frequent urination.

Risk factors include age (although younger people can and do have diabetes, risk increases with age), being overweight, high blood pressure, a family history of diabetes, gestational diabetes during pregnancy, giving birth to a baby weighing more than 9 pounds, and physical inactivity. Also people of African-American, Latino, Native American, Asian-American, or Pacific Islander decent are more at risk for developing diabetes.

People who are about 40 to 45, especially if they have a family history, need to get tested for diabetes.

Diabetes has no cure, magic or otherwise. But with self-care and conscientious monitoring of blood glucose levels, people with diabetes can live long, productive, and healthy lives.

If you want to learn more about taking care of your diabetic condition, plan to attend the Dining with Diabetes Sessions scheduled for June 12th, 13th, and 14th from 6-9 p.m. at the Fairbanks Food Bank. The classes will be taught by Joy Huber, Registered Dietician, and myself. Joy covers understanding and managing diabetes, and I go over the food section. We learn, cook, and taste - what can be better than that? The fee for the class is $15 per individual, $25 for couples to cover the cost of supplies. If you’d like to attend the class, give us a yell at 474-2420 and we’ll get you on the list.
Reining in Breast Cancer

The American Cancer Society last month recommended that women at high risk of developing breast cancer should get a magnetic resonance imaging - or MRI - each year in addition to a mammogram, beginning at age 30.

Together, these two tests can give doctors a better chance of finding breast cancer early, thus improving the woman’s chance of survival.

This year, more than 175,000 women in the U.S. are expected to be diagnosed with breast cancer; more than 40,000 will die. And more than 2 million women living in this country have been treated for the disease. So says the cancer society, which goes on to state that a woman has a 1 in 8 chance of contracting invasive breast cancer during her lifetime, and a 1 in 33 chance of dying from it. (http://www.cancer.org/)

However, the agency’s information added, “Breast cancer rates are going down. This decline is probably the result of finding the cancer earlier and improved treatment.”

MRI scans are more sensitive than mammograms, but are also more likely to show spots that may or may not be cancer. MRIs are also expensive and may not be covered by insurance. You should check with your insurance company before going through this procedure because it is much more expensive than the normal checks.

MRIs are not recommended for everyone as a tool against breast cancer, only women at high risk of developing the disease.

According to the cancer society’s recommendations, a woman should get an annual MRI screening if she has at least one of these conditions:
- BRCA1 or BRCA2 genetic mutation, which must be diagnosed by a medical professional.
- A parent, sibling or child with this kind of genetic mutation.
- A lifetime risk of developing invasive breast cancer that was scored at 20 percent to 25 percent or more, based on family history and other risk factors.
- Radiation to the chest between the ages of 10 and 30.
- Li-Fraumeni syndrome, Cowden syndrome or Bannayan-Riley-Ruvalcaba syndrome, or a close relative with any of these conditions.

But whether or not any of these conditions are factors, all women should begin getting annual mammograms at age 40. You should also start getting a clinical breast exam as part of your periodic health exam at least every three years during your 20s and 30s and every year if you are over 40.

Following these guidelines can help reduce the risk of breast cancer.

When it comes to safe barbecuing and hamburgers, the standard food safety advice that you can’t trust your eyes holds true once again...

Research shows that judging the safety of a cooked hamburger by its color is risky. Hamburgers that are brown all the way through can still harbor dangerous bacteria.

After years of advising people to cook burgers until brown, food safety specialists are recommending the use of a food thermometer to determine that the meat has reached a safe temperature of 160 degrees Fahrenheit to protect consumers.

The recognition that thermometers provided the safest approach developed after a study showed a quarter of all hamburgers tested did not reach a safe internal temperature despite appearing brown throughout.

With the Memorial Day holiday and summer barbecue season fast approaching, we need to be aware of the fact that you may not be able to see if a problem exists.

There are a combination of factors that can give hamburgers a false appearance. Some hamburgers are brown before they reach the safe 160 degrees. Other hamburgers reach the safe temperature but remain pink inside. The color of the meat is not a reliable indicator that the meat reached a safe temperature.

Instant-read food thermometers work best with thin meats such as hamburger patties or chicken breasts. There are two kinds of instant-read food thermometers available in grocery stores, dial and digital types.

Digital thermometers, for example, require inserting the bottom half-inch of the stem into the center of the meat. In a hamburger, that means inserting it from the side.

Getting an accurate reading actually requires 10 to 30 seconds in an instant-read food thermometer.

Advances in technology have helped cut the cost of thermometers. Dial thermometers sell for as little as $3.99 and up to $19 or so. The digital thermometers sell for $8.99 to $29.95.
Preventing Children's Swearing

When children swear, we need to try to understand why they are doing so before we react to those words that upset us. Often children do not understand very well what swear words mean.

√ They may not know how else to express strong feelings.
√ They may be experimenting with language they have just heard and testing our limits of acceptable behavior.
√ They may be imitating the behavior of a favorite character on TV or in a movie because they want to be like that person.

How should we as parents, teachers, or care givers respond?
√ We should avoid responding emotionally, because we’re only reinforcing the swearing. Stay calm.
√ Supply acceptable words. Say firmly, “I can’t let you use swear words, but you can say, I’m really angry with you because you won’t let me do __________!”
√ Hand the child paper to tear, a pillow to punch, or a marker to draw a face to show how he feels.
√ Ask the child what she thinks the swear words mean. Talk about why the words are unacceptable.
√ Suggest more appropriate ways to get people’s attention.
√ Most of all, try to reduce or eliminate the source of anger and stress, and brainstorm ways to help the child develop self-control.

Reference: Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies, University of Maine (2006). Retrieved 9/21/06