Recent U.S. Surveillance reports indicate that influenza activity is on the rise. To reduce the substantial burden of influenza on the U.S., CDC recommends a three-pronged approach: increasing the number of people vaccinated against influenza, appropriate use of influenza antiviral agents and promoting respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette.

1.) **First is the use of influenza seasonal vaccine.** Vaccination now can still provide protection against influenza this season since different influenza viruses can circulate as late as May. Vaccination is advised for people at increased risk of contracting influenza, including health care workers, and anyone else who wants to decrease their risk of getting influenza. You can get vaccinated at your physicians office or at your local health department.

2.) **An important second line of defense against influenza is the appropriate use of influenza antiviral medication.** These can be used to treat or prevent influenza virus infection. Treatment should begin within 48 hours of symptom onset, and can reduce symptoms and illness duration.

3.) **Use respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette measures to prevent the spread of influenza.** These everyday prevention actions include frequent hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes and staying home when sick to keep from spreading illness.

Visit the website address:  
[www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu) for more information.
Forget Myths, Folklore and Magic Bullets: The Best Approach to a Healthful Lifestyle Is the “Total Diet”

Don't eat after 8:00 pm. Avoid carbohydrates. A piece of cake on your birthday will ruin your diet. Right? Not exactly. “There are no bad foods, no good or bad times to eat and no magic bullet for maintaining a healthy weight,” says registered dietitian and American Dietetic Association spokesperson Ruth Frechman. “The fact is, it's the total diet approach that matters in living a healthful lifestyle.”

March is National Nutrition Month, the perfect time to take a fresh look at the big picture. “No single food or meal makes or breaks a healthful diet,” Frechman says. “Your overall pattern of eating is the most important focus. A wide variety of foods can fit within this pattern, if consumed in moderation, in appropriate portions and combined with regular physical activity. Nutrition: It's a Matter of Fact. The American Dietetic Association reminds consumers to focus on the total balance of foods you consume, rather than any one food meal.

“No one food or type of food guarantees good health, just as one single food or type of food is necessarily detrimental to health,” Frechman says. A registered dietitian can help you look at your total diet and learn the balance and moderation needed for success. They can also dispel the myths and legends that get in the way of healthful eating. “It doesn't matter if you eat after 8 pm. What's more important is how many calories you ate the entire day, not when you ate them,” Frechman says. “Splurging on cake and ice cream during a party isn't going to ruin a healthful eating plan. Pay attention to the portion and exercise a little longer the next day or plan ahead to save calories, like skipping your morning latte.”

Through National Nutrition Month, created in 1973, the American Dietetic Association promotes healthful eating by providing practical nutrition guidance and focusing attention on making informed food choices and developing sound physical activity habits.

With more than 67,000 members the American Dietetic Association is the nation’s largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. ADA serves the public by promoting optional nutrition, health and well-being. To locate a registered dietitian in your area, visit the American Dietetic Association at: www.eatright.org.

Easter Egg Safety

Egg handling at Easter or at any time during the year provides many opportunities for eggs to become contaminated with bacteria. Here are some tips on how to safely handle eggs at Easter—and all through the year.

**Keep fresh eggs refrigerated until it's time to cook them.** Eggs are a potentially hazardous food, in the same category as meat, poultry, fish and milk. In other words, they are capable of supporting the rapid growth of disease-causing bacteria like Salmonella.

The American Egg Board (AEB) recommends this method for boiling eggs. Place eggs in single layer in saucepan. Add enough tap water to come at least 1 inch above eggs. A tablespoon of vinegar can be added to allow better dye coverage after cooking. Cover pan and quickly bring just to boiling. Let eggs stand, covered, in the hot water for 15 minutes. Immediately run cold water over eggs or place them in ice water until completely cooled. Refrigerate all hard cooked eggs.
Eggs should always be cooked well. The Food and Drug Administration recommends cooking eggs until both the yolk and the white are firm, not runny. This way any salmonella or other harmful bacteria that may be in the eggs will be destroyed.

Do not handle eggs excessively. Wash your hands thoroughly when you do handle them, whether in cooking, cooling, dyeing or hiding. The shell of an egg is very porous and will permit bacteria to penetrate. Most commercial egg producers lightly coat their eggs with a thin spray coating of mineral oil to close the pores against contamination. Cooking the egg in the shell, however, removes that barrier so that your hard cooked eggs are again prone to contamination unless you protect them by proper handling.

Care should be used on choosing hiding places for Easter eggs. Make sure to avoid areas where the eggs might come into contact with pets, wild animals, birds, reptiles, insects or lawn chemicals. Refrigerate after they have been hidden and found again. Don't eat eggs with cracked shells or eggs that have been out of the refrigerator for more than two hours.

Spring Cleaning Tips and Tricks

Spring is almost here! It's time to get rid of a winter's worth of dust and grime. Unfortunately, it's also the time of year when we all want to be outside enjoying the fresh air. The good news is that with a thorough spring cleaning, all of the fragrant crispness of springtime can be felt throughout the house. And with the following tips to guide you, you'll be able to clean up quickly and efficiently, with plenty of time left over to stop and smell the newly budding roses. Even before you clean, there are a few precautions you should take so that cleaning can be finished as painlessly as possible.

- Be comfortable. Wear comfortable old clothes that you won't mind staining or getting dirty.

- Take stock of your cleaning needs and supplies. Don't wait until you're about to clean the oven to find out that you don't have any oven cleaner left. Have everything on hand and ready to go for a smooth time.

- Prepare one bucket of supplies to bring with you to every room. All you really need are a few rags, some paper towels, furniture polish and one good all purpose glass and counter cleaner. These items will do the trick for most cleaning jobs. Also, grab two empty garbage bags: one to carry garbage you find along the way and the other to fill with things you no longer want but are still useful. You can give these items away or sell them at a later date.

- Turn off the TV and the phone! The quickest cleaning is accomplished without any distraction.

- Get organized. Make a list of the rooms you want to tackle, then clean each room fully before moving on the next.

- Open the windows and let the clean, green aroma of spring's new flower and plant life enter. Not only will the mustiness of winter be removed, but you'll also protect yourself from inhaling dust and dangerous fumes from cleaning products.

- Play some fun, lively music. Before you know it, your adrenaline will start pumping and you'll be dancing your way through the house.
- **Toss away everything you don't use.** I mean everything! Be ruthless. Less clutter not only makes future dusting easier, it also has a tendency to give us a freer, more relaxed frame of mind when we enjoy these rooms. Feng shui, the art of uncluttered living, has long been practiced by Chinese people. It is believed that if the universe's energy, or chi, can easily flow through a room, our lives will be more harmonious and joyful. Decorators worldwide are now embracing the simple beauty of barer rooms for easier living.

- **Gather the extra items in your life and give them to charity, or sell them at a springtime yard sale.** Get the whole family in the act by telling kids that they can keep the profits from selling toys they no longer use.

- **Work around the room in one direction, either left or right.** This way, there won't be any time wasted in criss-crossing the room or vacuuming that same spot twice.

- **Clear it off and put it away.** This is really the first step to cleaning any room. In the living room this means putting away books and recycling old magazines. Clear away all knickknacks and family photos so that dusting and polishing can be finished in a snap. In the bedroom, remove items stored under the bed, and file away or throw out papers. In the kitchen, remove everything from counters and take down curtains. In the bathroom, clear away potpourri holders, magazines and waste baskets. Take down the shower curtain and liner for laundering. Just remember to tackle one room at a time. Remove these items and cleaning will be much easier.

- **Wear rubber gloves!** Even though it is harder to grip things with gloves than it is with bare hands, it is worth using them to protect your skin from the harshness of hot water and drying chemicals.

When you're finished cleaning, it's time to put back those items you need and love.

- **The only necessary appliances on kitchen counters are the ones that you use daily or weekly.** Stash anything else in cabinets or cupboards. Also, if you have a counter full of cook books you seldom use, you may want to put them on a shelf for more living and cooking space.

- **Try putting treasured knickknacks and photos on different tables, shelves, or even in different rooms.** This will give your home a fresh new look.

---

**Spring Is Here - Get Moving Outdoors!**

With the cold weather gone, now is the time to enjoy the beautiful weather outside. Here are some ideas to get you and your family moving outside:

**Go for a bike ride.** Cycling offers many moving benefits:

- **Fitness.** Cycling regularly can build both your strength and endurance. That means strong muscles and a strong heart!

- **Healthy weight maintenance.** Cycling is a great way to balance physical activity with calorie intake.
Stress reduction. Imagine cycling on a beautiful day – sun shining, a cool breeze. What an excellent way to get over the day’s stress!

Dive in. Swimming offers many health benefits:

- It requires use of all major muscle groups and is an aerobic activity, making it great for both cardiovascular health and weight control.

- Swimming can also help improve posture and flexibility while being gentle on bones and joints. It's a great way to get moving no matter your body shape, age or condition!

Walk in your community. Walking gets us moving more for health while connecting us to our local communities. Walking is:

- Affordable. There are no fees, and no equipment is necessary.

- Physical fitness. Walking benefits your heart and bone health while keeping your weight in check.

- Mental fitness. Walking has been shown to improve attention and memory. Who knew that walking could be such a smart move?

- Enjoyable. Walking can be a time when you catch up with friends, find mental peace or bond with a pet.

(Source: www.myeatsmartmovemore.com)

Make Your Bedding Snuggly Warm and Springtime Fresh

Since winter has officially ended, it's a natural time to “spring clean” your comforters and bedspreads. But how do you wash them? You may have noticed that permanent cleaning labels are not required on home furnishing fabrics, which means comforters and bedspreads are sold with care instruction on a temporary label or on the packaging. Keep in mind that without proper directions, it's a risky business to wash them yourself. If you don't have proper care instructions, it is best to trust the job to a dry cleaning professional. Not only are comforters and bedspreads often too large for your home washing machine, but you'll avoid the disappointment that can come with washing them at home. Some problems that can occur if bedding is not cleaned properly.

Color Loss:

- Ask the dry cleaner to test your comforter or bedspread for colorfastness. This will help determine the best cleaning process – laundering or dry cleaning. Keep in mind that cleaning can cause color lose or diminish the fabric's original brightness.

- Clean all your matching or coordinating bed items (dust ruffle, pillow shams and drapery) at the same time and with the same process. This will prevent color variances within the set.

Shrinkage:

- Some shrinkage can occur if fabric is not completely preshrunk. This may cause the comforter or bedspread to fit differently or appear too small.
Store it Right:

- Once your cold-weather bedding is cleaned, be sure it's stored properly.

- Choose a clean container, not a plastic bag. To prevent fading, moisture and mildew, store seasonal items in a dark, dry area. Items made of down should be stored loosely to promote air circulation.

Make Bedding Last Longer:

- Since bedding is a long-term purchase, consider adding a duvet cover to your comforter. It can extend the comforter's normal life of five to six years. Plus, it offers more fashion options and is easier to clean.

- Shake your down comforter each morning to maximize loft and durability.

- Vacuum your comforter or bedspread to avoid dust from gathering.

- To keep your room fresh, clean your outer bedding at least once a season and again before it's stored.

Keep the Beat - Read a Poem!

Rhythm is more than marching to the beat of a favorite song or keeping time with the music by tapping a foot.

Different language are filled with different kinds of rhythm. As we learn to talk while very young, we are also learning the rhythm that helps us understand and communicate in our language.

To help young children appreciate the many types of rhythm in addition to the ones they hear in modern music, show them how they can mark time in poetry. That is, read a poem aloud and ask them to feel the rhythm by walking or waving an arm “in time” with the words.

Each poem has its own unique “meter,” and you may want to use several different ones as examples.

This is also an excellent way to introduce your child to poetry, to enrich his or her storehouse of ideas and to add an abundance of new words to his or her vocabulary.

“What Can I Do Now?”

Here are some easy activities for kids for those rainy days . . . or any time “there's nothing to do.”

Write a letter to a friend, a grandparent or another relative by cutting out words from magazines, newspapers or other printed material.

The letter isn't finished until the envelope is properly addressed, stamped and mailed.

Younger children can cut out a picture they like or want to write about. An adult can help hunt words, if necessary.

Provide materials for a nifty coat hanger cover: a coat hanger, paper, glue or tape, and markers. Kids can figure out how to attach the paper to the hanger, and how they wish to decorate it.

Play ball inside with rolled up socks for a ball and clothes basket or wastebasket for a basket. The games can be easy or hard, depending on where and how far away the basket is located.
March Spotlight:
Onslow County ECA
Achievement Day
by: Peggie Garner

The Onslow County Extension and Community Association (ECA) celebrated their 2007 achievements on February 26th. The speaker for the event was Mrs. Ivy Reid, Jones County Extension Director, for the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service.

The event started off with a memorial to ECA members and Mr. Ed Cole, former Onslow County Clerk of Court that had passed away since the last Achievement Day.

Several members were recognized for special awards. They are as follows:

**Perfect Attendance** – 15 members were recognized for attending all of the club's monthly meetings.

**Reading Certificates** – Six members were recognized for reading a total of 56 books and submitting book reports of all books read. Kathy Cook was recognized for reading a total of 30 books. The Onslow County Public Library recognized the following ladies for their book reports: First Place – Gloria Wiley; Second Place – Donna Williams; Third Place - Sue Janning; and Honorable Mention – Kathy Cook.

**Cofer Leader Program Award** - Barbara Crossman received this award for a lesson she presented to her club. All clubs voted on a member that had presented information during the year. Judges then picked the overall winner from reports presented to them.

**Most Outstanding Club Member** - The following members were recognized after being voted on by the club members as the club's outstanding member. Jean Ross – Harmony; Kathy Cook – Jacksonville; Donna Williams – Meadows; and Barbara Nichols – Sneads Ferry.

**Most Outstanding Club** – This award is voted on by judges after seeing all the work done by a club's members. This year's award was presented to the Meadow View Club.

**Extension and Community Associate of the Year** - This award is given to an outstanding member that goes above and beyond the call of duty. This year's award was presented to Donna Williams from the Meadow View Club.

Other awards were given but the winners' names were not available at the time of this release.

For more information regarding the Extension and Community Association, please call Peggie Garner at 455-5873.

Robin Taylor
Extension Agent
Family & Consumer Science

Peggie L. Garner
Onslow County Extension Director