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For more information,
contact: Tyler Johnson
Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program Agent, Wildcat Extension District
tajohnson120@ksu.edu, 620-232-1930

Cooking Throughout the Day: *Suggestions for those working at home or spending weekends at home*

Depending on where you live, work, and play, any number of changes happened to your daily routines over the last few months. Initially, these changes impacted our lives in a major way. For many of us, this impact is continuing, but it may be felt in other areas of our life or in different ways. Cooking and physical exercise are two of these ways. Some of my previous articles have specifically addressed shopping and healthier choices. This article is going to be different, but I hope you find it helpful.

The idea for this article came after talking with a friend who I spent years working with in the food service industry. We were talking about how cooking is starting to become a chore. Additionally, we discussed how our habit of sitting more will affect our overall health. After this discussion, I began thinking about how to combine healthier cooking habits and increasing our physical activity. First off, when I say physical activity, I know many people think of walking, running, biking, etc. Although you can build those types of physical activity into your cooking routine, I am going to be describing just getting up and moving around every so often. This type of physical activity helps reduce many health issues including heart disease, diabetes, and depression, just to name a few. So what is it? I am glad you asked!

Research tells us very basic physical movements, like standing or walking for 5 minutes of every 30 minutes or hour of sitting significantly reduces health related risks of being inactive over long periods of time. Some preparation for cooking can be done during these 5-10 minute breaks. This way, the 45-minute meal prep and cook time many people dread at the end of the day, can be split across the day. By giving yourself extra time, it will allow you to work at your own pace and not feel rushed. Hopefully, this trick will make cooking feel like less of a chore.

To give you an example, I will use my own day and meal. Working from home means spending a lot of time sitting in front of a computer. To get some physical exercise and eat healthy, last weekend I planned dinner last night to be Chicken Alfredo with a salad. In my small breaks during the day, I chopped up the vegetables for the salad, made the Alfredo Sauce, and grilled the chicken. When it was time to start dinner, all I had to do was boil some pasta and put everything on the plate. It seemed a lot quicker since it was spread throughout the day. Also, the small breaks left me not feeling as stiff while I was working.

Although this sounds easy enough, like every other change, it takes time. I encourage you to try to cook throughout the day and see how it works. There is not a recommended time or way of doing this activity. Make it work for you. Everyone has different schedules, food needs, and physical limitations. Additionally, you can stretch your cooking skills and “pre-cook” for future meals. For example, I made more grilled chicken than I needed. I put the leftovers in the refrigerator so I can use it in another recipe later this week.

There are three important things to remember while cooking throughout the day. First, use it to balance your commitments (family, work, etc.) and your body’s need for, and ability to, exercise. Second, keep food safety in mind. This includes not leaving items on the counter when your breaks are over. It also means to be sure and remember what you have made and not used. This way, the food does not go to waste. Finally, remember to enjoy yourself. If you find cooking or doing something the same way over and over again, try changing it up.

Please contact me to schedule an appointment or for more information, contact Tyler Johnson, tajohnson120@ksu.edu, or by calling 620-232-1930.

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