

Media Contact: Erin Prather Stafford
214-648-3404
erin.pratherstafford@utsouthwestern.edu

**Summer's colorful produce offers prime opportunity
for increasing fruits, vegetables in children's diets**

DALLAS – July 5, 2007 – The abundance of summer's fresh produce – from farmer's markets to roadside stands – offers families the perfect opportunity to introduce the healthy habit of eating more fruits and vegetables, say UT Southwestern Medical Center clinical nutritionists.

“Offering children fruit or vegetable choices empowers them to make healthy decisions regarding their diet,” said Cindy Cunningham, assistant professor of clinical nutrition. “Summer is the perfect time for a family to start increasing its intake of these foods because they are inexpensive and readily available.”

Young children should consume at least five servings of fruits or vegetables per day, as should teenagers and adults, said Ms. Cunningham, who is a registered dietitian.

Dr. Abhimanyu Garg, professor of internal medicine in the Center for Human Nutrition, said it's essential to teach children about good nutrition so they can carry the healthy habits with them for life. Adults have generally already formed their food preferences, but if a variety of fruits and vegetables are introduced to young children, a lifelong impression might be made, he said. Children who learn to make good food choices are more likely to grow up to be healthy adults.

“There are simple steps people can take to work fruits and vegetables into their diet,” Ms. Cunningham said. “Berries can be added to breakfast cereal, or a fruit salad can be served for lunch. Vegetables can be grilled alongside meat, and fruit makes a delicious and simple dessert. The great thing about fruit is that there's very little cooking involved – just wash, peel and slice. A proper diet needs to include variety to ensure a person is getting all the nutrients needed for good health.”

Color is the key when choosing fruits and vegetables, she said. Studies have shown that red, orange or green vegetables are the most nutrient dense. All fruits and vegetables contain phytochemicals, which give them their color. Phytochemicals are the disease-fighting substances found only in plant-based foods. Studies have shown that eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables may help lower the risk for certain cancers, high blood pressure and eye diseases. UT Southwestern researchers

(MORE)

Colorful foods – 2

have found that eating at least 50 grams of soluble fiber, which is found in fruits and vegetables, each day can help lower insulin levels for diabetics.

Tips for helping children eat more fruits and vegetables

- Start increasing children's intake by adding fruits and vegetables to meals. Make it a game for youngsters to eat as many colors from the rainbow as they can in a day.
- Use sliced fruits and vegetables for snacks and desserts. Make these snacks easy to select by having them ready in the refrigerator. Cut offerings down to bite-size for small children.
- Have youngsters start each day with a glass of 100 percent fruit or vegetable juice. Frozen juices from concentrate are as nutritious as fresh fruits, as long as the label says "100 percent juice."
- Keep introducing new fruits and vegetables to children. It's common for youngsters to love a food one day and hate it the next. Continue offering healthy, diverse choices, and they'll eventually eat a wider variety. Don't force children to eat food they don't like.
- Have children look in cookbooks and magazines for new recipes to try. Take them on the next trip to the grocery store or the farmer's market so they can assist in finding the healthy ingredients. Ask them to choose a new fruit or vegetable to try.

###

This news release is available on our World Wide Web home page at
<http://www.utsouthwestern.edu/home/news/index.html>

To automatically receive news releases from UT Southwestern via e-mail,
subscribe at www.utsouthwestern.edu/receivenews