Dear Extension Friend:

In this month’s Newsletter I have included an article in the Health & Safety section on space heater safety. With the most recent weather I’m sure many of you are doing what you can to stay warm and we just want to make sure you do it safely. I have also continued the series of money management tips on page 3 in the section Money Matters.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to say Happy New Year to all of you and your families. This is the time of year when many people want to make a change with new year’s resolutions and I wish you luck with whatever it is you have chosen. If there is any information that you need from us here at the Extension office, please come by and see us.

Enjoy the Newsletter, and as always if you have any questions, concerns or suggestions please give me a call.

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Simply Florida: A Taste of Flavors from the Sunshine State

Looking for a great gift idea for that gourmet cook in your life? The new Simply Florida cookbook created by Family & Consumer Sciences agents throughout Florida is the perfect choice! Order your copy today by calling Melanie at (904) 259-3520 or by visiting http://www.simplyflorida.org.
Health: Space Heater Safety

Each year, hundreds of people go to hospital emergency rooms because of injuries related to space heaters. When clothing comes in contact with a heating element or flame it can catch fire. Leaking gas can cause explosions. Inhaling carbon monoxide from a malfunctioning, poorly vented, or unvented gas heater can cause death.

General Safety Tips for All Space Heaters
1. Read the label and follow the instructions for installation and operation.
2. Keep paper, clothing, furniture, and especially children away from space heaters.
3. Keep the heater in safe working condition. Replace any missing grille, guard, or controls at once.

Safety Tips for Electric Space Heaters
1. Free-standing electric heaters should have tip-over switches. These switches shut off the current if the unit is knocked over. This helps prevent a fire if the heater falls against fabric or other flammable materials.
2. There must be a guard around the heating coil of your heater. A wire grille or other protection is essential to keep fingers or fabrics from touching the hot coil.
3. If you must use an extension cord, make sure it's marked with a power rating at least as high as that on the label of the heater itself.
4. Keep it away from water! Don't use a portable electric heater anywhere in a bathroom or near a sink.

Safety Tips for Gas Space Heaters
1. Your gas space heater should be properly vented. The vent pipe should have no cracks through which deadly carbon monoxide might leak. An undersized or clogged vent is very hazardous.
2. If you must use an unvented heater, keep a door or window slightly open at all times. Good ventilation during use is crucial!
3. Light the match before you turn on the gas, to prevent accumulation of gas. This will prevent gas from flaring up when you bring the match near.
4. Remember that a space heater can ignite flammable liquids and vapors. Never use a space heater in the same room where gasoline is stored. Never use a space heater where paint thinners, kerosene, or other volatile liquids are being used.

Safety Tips for Kerosene-, Oil-, or Wood-burning Space Heaters
1. These should be properly vented to prevent the accumulation of carbon monoxide.
2. Use only the fuel for which the heater was designed. Don't use kerosene in an oil heater and vice versa.

Never use highly flammable liquids—like gasoline—to get a wood stove started.

Source: Harrison, Mary, Keeping it Safe: Space Heaters, FCS5233-02, University of Florida
Money Matters: Stretch Your Food Dollar

Prevent Food Waste

• Cut down on the amount of food you throw away; freeze leftovers or use them in recipes like soups or casseroles.

• Take leftovers for lunch instead of eating out; store properly to keep foods safe to eat.

• Before buying an unfamiliar food, be sure you know how to prepare it.

• Buy only the amount of food you can store and use before it spoils.

Plan Ahead

• Plan meals for a week using foods on hand and grocery store specials.

• Clip and use coupons.

• Cook large batches when possible; divide into portions and freeze.

General Money Saving Tips

• Cut down on expensive ready-to-eat salty and sweet snacks.

• Enjoy seasonal or dried fruit, veggies (cut your own), whole grain crackers, or low-fat yogurt for nutritious snacks.

  • Limit pre-made meals and fast foods.

  • Buy a reusable water bottle and fill it with tap water. Refrigerate overnight and keep it with you during the day.

  • Avoid excess soda, expensive energy drinks, and coffee shop drinks.

Source: “Managing in Tough Times” handbook, UF/IFAS Extension
For a heart healthy breakfast, enjoy oatmeal made with fat free milk, chopped apple and lots of cinnamon.

Cut soft whole wheat bread with heart shaped cookie cutters to make healthy sandwiches fun for kids.

Keep ready to eat veggies handy in your refrigerator for quick, heart healthy snacks. Try baby carrots, celery sticks, cucumber rounds, and sliced bell peppers.

Bake chicken or fish with your favorite salsa for a quick and heart healthy entrée.

Exercise your heart with a family walk after dinner – or anytime!

Add mandarin oranges, sliced strawberries or other fruit to your family’s dinner salad for a heart healthy variation.

For a special treat, dip strawberries in melted dark chocolate – a double dose of heart friendly phytochemicals (and great taste)!

Exercise your insides too: giggle with your family at least once a day!

Cook with heart–healthy oils like olive and canola. Mix with red vinegar for a heart healthy salad dressing.

Get more cooking tips from a heart healthy cookbook, class or on line resources like MyPyramid.gov, American Heart Association and 5 a day.

Source: Bobroff, Linda and Shelnutt, Karla, On Valentine's Day and Everyday 10 Heart-Healthy Ways to Show Your Family You Love Them, University of Florida