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Family and Consumer
Sciences Department
University of Florida -
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What is the Ecological Footprint?

The Ecological Footprint is a way to measure the **ecological impact** of a particular person or community. By measuring our Ecological Footprint, we can begin to pinpoint ways to reduce environmental impact.

The Eco-Footprint is calculated in global acres, which represent the total amount of land necessary to provide the resources used and absorb the pollution produced by a community. There are 4.7 acres of bioproductive land available for each person on Earth, which means that a sustainable society would have an Eco-Footprint of 4.7 global acres or less.

Instead, many countries have higher Eco-Footprints, showing how they extract resources from all over the world. The United States, for example, has the highest Eco-Footprint in the world, of 24 acres per person. If everyone in the world lived like the average American, we would need five more planets!

The Eco-Footprint addresses six main areas: (1) Energy, (2) Housing, (3) Food, (4) Goods and Services, (5) Transportation and (6) Recycling.

These are the major ways in which a community consumes resources and creates pollution and waste (except for Recycling, which is a negative calculation of waste reduction). This data is used to pinpoint ways to improve our community's ecological impact.

The Eco-Footprint helps us to visualize the ways in which our everyday actions affect people and the environment throughout the world. Measuring our Ecological Footprint is the first step towards looking at how we can become a more sustainable community.

Source: Sustainable Sarasota, www.sustainablesarasota.com

Dealing with Dry Eye

Tears serve as a protective coating for the eyes. They keep the eyes moist, provide essential nutrients, and wash away dust and other particles. When the eyes don't produce enough tears or the right quality of tears, the result is a condition that doctors call keratitis sicca, popularly known as "dry eye."

Just as the name suggests, this condition makes the eyes feel dry, scratchy, and gritty. Other symptoms include burning, stinging, itching, pain, sensitivity to light, redness, blurry vision, and the feeling that there is a speck of dirt in the eye. There may also be a stringy discharge from the eyes. And though it may seem strange, dry eye can cause the eyes to water. "This can happen because the eyes are irritated," says Carolyn Begley, O.D., a professor of optometry at Indiana University in Bloomington. "You may experience excessive tearing the same way you would if something got in your eye."

But these tears won't necessarily make the eyes feel better. Reflex tears--the watery type that are produced in response to injury, irritation, or emotion--don't have the lubricating qualities necessary to prevent dry eye. Tear film is made of water, oil, and mucus, all of which are important for maintaining good eye health. The cornea, which covers the front of the eye, needs these tears continuously to protect it against infection. Most people who have dry eye experience mild irritation with no long-term effects, Begley says. But if the condition is left untreated or becomes severe, eye damage and vision loss can occur. Severe problems with dry eye can cause eye inflammation, corneal infection, and scarring.

"When dry eye symptoms are severe, they can interfere with quality of life," Begley says. "Some people may have trouble keeping their eyes open or they may not be able to work or drive." Fortunately, identifying the cause of the problem and seeking treatment early can make a big difference in easing the discomfort.

Common Causes

Aging is one of the most common causes of dry eye because tear production decreases as we get older. Dry eye affects more women than men because hormonal changes, such as those that occur in pregnancy, menstruation, and menopause, can decrease tear production. Environmental conditions also can play a role. Wind, heat, dust, air conditioning, cigarette smoke, and even hair dryers can make the eyes dry. Some people benefit from avoiding dusty, smoky areas, wearing sunglasses, and using a humidifier to moisten the surrounding air.

Another common culprit is not blinking enough, which happens during activities such as watching TV and computer use. "Each time you blink, it coats the eye with tears," Begley says. "You normally blink about every 12 seconds. But we've done studies of people playing computer games, and found that some people blinked once or twice in three minutes."

Begley says that about half of all people who wear contact lenses complain of dry eye. That's because soft contact lenses, which float on the tear film that covers the cornea, absorb the tears in the eyes. Dry eye also occurs or gets worse after LASIK and other refractive surgeries, in

which the corneal nerves are cut during creation of a corneal flap. The corneal nerves stimulate tear secretion. Begley says, "If you've had dry eyes from wearing contact lenses or for any other reason and you are thinking about refractive surgery, this is something to consider."

Dry eye also can be caused by certain medications, including antihistamines, some antidepressants, birth control pills, nasal decongestants, and the prescription acne drug Accutane. And some autoimmune diseases, such as lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, and Sjögren's syndrome, can attack the tear glands.

Other diseases can also cause dry eye. For example, certain types of thyroid disease can interfere with blinking. Blepharitis, an inflammation of the eyelids, can interfere with the oil glands in the eyes.

Diagnosis and Treatment

Even though many treatments for dry eye are available without a prescription, it's wise to see a health care professional to evaluate the cause of the condition and to help you pick the best treatment.

Eye doctors use a combination of routine clinical exams and other specific tests for dry eye. For example, the Schirmer test uses a tiny strip of paper placed on the edge of the lower eyelids. "This measures how much moisture is in the eye, and it's also useful for determining the severity of the problem," Begley says. Doctors may also use dye, such as fluorescein or rose bengal, which is placed on the eye to stain the surface. This is to see how much the surface of the eye has been affected by dryness. Another test, tear break-up time (TBUT), measures the time it takes for tears to break up in the eye.

The first line of treatment for dry eye is usually over-the-counter demulcent drops, also known as artificial tears. These lubricate the eye and ease symptoms. Commonly found ingredients in these products include hydroxypropyl methylcellulose, the ingredient in Bion Tears and GenTeal, and carboxymethylcellulose, contained in Refresh Plus and Thera Tears. Always read the directions, but these products can generally be used as often as needed throughout the day.

Your health care professional can guide you in choosing the right one for you. "Some people use drops for red eyes, but that can make the eyes even more dry," Begley says. Red eyes could be caused by numerous factors, from allergies to an eye infection, which is why a proper diagnosis is important. If you wear contact lenses, use rewetting drops specifically for contact lenses. Other types of drops may contain ingredients that damage the lens.

Restasis (cyclosporine ophthalmic emulsion) is the only prescription product for chronic dry eyes. Approved by the Food and Drug Administration in 2002, the drug increases tear production, which may be reduced because of inflammation on the eye surface. In a clinical trial involving 1,200 people, Restasis increased tear production in 15 percent of patients, compared with 5 percent of patients in the placebo group, says Wiley Chambers, M.D., deputy director of the FDA's Division of Anti-Inflammatory, Analgesic and Ophthalmologic Drug Products.

Restasis is usually given twice a day, 12 hours apart. It should not be used by people with eye infections or hypersensitivity to the ingredients. It has not been tested in people with herpes viral infections of the eye. The most common side effect is a burning sensation. Other side effects may be eye redness, discharge, watery eyes, eye pain, foreign body sensation, itching, stinging, and blurred vision.

For people who have not found dry eye relief with drugs, punctal plugs may help. "These are reserved for people with moderate or severe dry eye when other medical treatment hasn't been adequate," says Eva Rorer, M.D., a medical officer in the FDA's Division of Ophthalmic and Ear, Nose, and Throat Devices.

In each eye, there are four puncta, little openings that drain tears into the tear ducts. Punctal plugs are inserted into the puncta to block tear drainage. Some doctors try out temporary ones made of collagen first to make sure that permanent ones will not cause excessive tearing. Permanent plugs are usually made of silicone. In recent years, Rorer says, some plugs have been approved that are made of thermally reactive material. "Some of these are inserted into the punctum as a liquid and then they harden and conform to the individual's drainage system." Others start out rigid and become soft and flexible, adapting to the individual's punctal size after they are inserted. Artificial tears are usually still required after punctal plug insertion.

"The risks of punctal plugs are fairly minimal," Rorer says. "There is a risk of eye irritation, excessive tearing, and, in rare cases, infection."

Source: FDA Consumer Magazine May-June 2005

Curbing Your Appetite

When it comes to curbing your appetite, if the "just-say-no" technique just doesn't work, try these tips:

- Eat breakfast--Eating regular meals and snacks prevents the "famine-then-feast syndrome." Make breakfast a high-fiber cereal, whole-grain bread, or fresh fruit, and you're more likely to eat less at lunch.
- Eat when you're hungry--By responding to physical signals to eat, you may be less apt to eat in response to stress or boredom.
- Eat slowly--Savoring each flavor and texture can boost satisfaction. It also takes about 20 minutes for your brain to receive the signal you're full
- Ride out the urge--Cravings generally pass within minutes, maybe even seconds. Busy yourself with an activity unrelated to food until the desire to eat passes. For a good distraction, exercise.
- Start small--If you always finish what's in front of you, start with half the amount of food you usually eat. You may find a smaller serving just as satisfying. To make less food seem like more, serve your main course on a salad or dessert plate.
- Splurge now and then--If you're really committed to eating less, an occasional lapse is OK. It has little impact on a lifetime plan for controlling your appetite.

Source: North Carolina Cooperative Extension

Exercise Made Easy

The 2005 Dietary Guidelines recommend finding your balance between food and physical activity. Consuming more calories than you expend leads to weight gain. More than half of all Americans don't get the recommended amount of physical activity. To reduce the risk of chronic disease in adulthood, engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate activity a day on most days of the week. Children and adolescents should engage in at least 60 minutes a day on most, and preferably all, days of the week.

To manage body weight and prevent gradual weight gain, people should exercise about 60 minutes at a moderate to vigorous intensity on most days of the week, while not exceeding recommendations for caloric intake. Sixty to 90 minutes may be needed to maintain weight loss.

The more vigorous the activity and the longer the duration, the more health benefits you'll get. But every little bit counts. Here are some examples of easy ways to work exercise into your day:

- Take a 10-minute walk after breakfast, lunch, and dinner to reach the goal of 30 minutes per day.
- Park your car in the farthest spot when you run errands.
- Take a family walk after dinner.
- Walk your dog.
- Do yard work.
- Wash your car by hand.
- Pace the sidelines at kids' athletic games.
- Ask a friend to exercise with you.
- Run around and play with your children for 30 minutes a day.
- Walk briskly at the mall.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.

Source: FDA Consumer Magazine

Identity Theft Is Not Just For Adults

Offenses against children are on the rise, and a University of Florida consumer education expert says the problem can actually be worse for younger victims.

“Many parents don’t realize that child identity theft exists, which means the crime often goes undetected for years,” said Mary Harrison, a professor with UF’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.

“Parents need to know how to recognize child identity theft because early discovery can greatly reduce the impact on victims,” she said. “If the crime is reported promptly, the thief has less time to run up debt, and authorities have a better chance of finding evidence.”

For children under 18, the number of identity theft complaints reported to the U.S. Federal Trade Commission increased by more than half between 2003 and 2004 – from about 6,400 cases to 9,800. At the same time, the percentage of child victims among all identity theft cases increased from 3 to 4 percent.

In some respects, identity thieves treat personal data from children and adults the same way, Harrison said. Most often, they use stolen information to conduct fraudulent financial transactions, though they sometimes use it to obtain government documents such as driver’s licenses, or give it to police when stopped or charged with a crime.

But when it comes to credit card fraud, child identity theft differs in an important respect: Thieves necessarily create new credit accounts for child victims, whereas most cases of adult identity theft involve existing accounts, she said. That can make the crime worse for child victims.

According to a 2003 FTC survey, victims of new account fraud spend four times as much time and almost five times as much money clearing their records compared with victims who had only existing accounts accessed. Victims of new account fraud are also far more likely to encounter other problems, such as denial of credit, loss of utility or phone service and criminal investigation.

Safeguarding a child’s identity requires many of the same precautions parents should take for themselves but with a few twists, Harrison said.

Preschool-age children are unlikely to be approached by scammers, so parents must bear the burden of protecting documents and other information, she said. Parents should avoid carrying their child’s Social Security card, and should complain if their child’s school uses Social Security numbers to identify students.

For older children, the popularity of personal computers in homes and schools creates a risk they will be victimized by Internet scams such as “phishing,” Harrison said.

“Even bright children who are very computer-savvy may not understand the dangers of being too free with their personal information,” she said.

Harrison recommends that parents monitor their children’s Internet use, talk to their kids about identity theft and tell them what information they should and should not share with others.

Parents should also monitor incoming mail for children of all ages because credit card offers or even debt collection notices can indicate credit activity is taking place already, said Linda Foley of the Identity Theft Resource Center, a nonprofit organization based in San Diego, Calif.

“Getting a credit card offer addressed to your child does not necessarily mean there’s a problem,” Foley said. “If you have opened a bank account or a frequent flyer card in your child’s name, your child may receive mass-mailings from credit affiliates. Parents should call the company that has the child’s information to see if they’re on a marketing list.”

Receiving debt collection notices in your child’s name is a much more serious indication that your child’s information is being misused, and warrants checking the child’s credit report with the three major credit reporting agencies, Experian, TransUnion and Equifax, she said.

Harrison said parents should consider checking their children’s credit reports every year, especially if they suspect their personal information has been compromised.

“Ordering an annual credit report for your child increases the likelihood you will uncover child identity theft in a timely fashion,” she said. “If no credit accounts have been established in your child’s name, the credit agencies will inform you that your child does not have a credit report.”

A new federal law makes one free credit report a year available to all residents of the United States.

Parents who discover evidence of child identity theft should immediately report fraudulent activity to one of the three major credit reporting agencies and ask that a fraud alert be placed on the child’s credit record, she said. Parents should also contact any creditors listed in the child’s credit report and file a police report.

Harrison said it is vital for parents of child victims to understand the seriousness of this crime and take action promptly.

“A person’s credit score is becoming so important now – not just for getting credit, but also for obtaining insurance, finding housing and applying for jobs,” she said. “ID theft can have a very far-reaching impact.”

Source: Mary Harrison, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL

Do You Know That Canned Food Is Packed Full Of Nutrition?

Did you know that canned food is packed full of nutrition? Nutritionally speaking, canned food is comparable to its cooked fresh and frozen counterparts. Plus, it's available year-round so it can easily be used in favorite and new-to-you dishes for a convenient and flavorful meal any time of day.

Canned food is packed at its peak, close to the source.

Prepared foods, such as soups and stews, are canned within the facilities in which they are prepared to ensure the ultimate in freshness. More than 50 varieties of soups, stews and chili are available in cans, making meal preparation easy!

Once the cans are sealed and heat processed, the food maintains its high eating quality for more than two years and is safe to eat as long as the container is not damaged in any way.

Most canned fruits and veggies contain no preservatives. They're picked and packed at the peak of ripeness, cooked quickly at high temperatures and sterilized in steel cans to keep nutrients in and impurities out.

Most canneries are located just a few miles from the field, ensuring that canned food is packed at the peak of freshness.

Canners use only top quality ingredients, which are picked, prepared and canned within hours.

Canned food is good for your health.

Almost all canned vegetables and canned fruits are fat-free.

Based on epidemiological studies, canned carrots, as part of an over-all healthful diet, have the potential for reducing the risk of cancer.

Canned tomatoes are higher in lycopene than their fresh counterparts. Lycopene appears to be effective in helping to reduce the risk of cancer. In fact, lycopene may be more effective when it is consumed after tomatoes are canned or cooked.

Canned food only needs to be warmed through before serving because it has already been cooked in the can. By keeping the cooking juices, canned foods lose remarkably little of their nutritional value.

Many canned food products are available in low-salt and no-salt alternatives.

Carotenes are antioxidants that provide protection for the body's cells. Canned apricots, carrots, peaches, pumpkin, spinach and sweet potatoes are all high in carotenes.

Canned beans of all types (black beans, red beans, butter beans, garbanzo beans, etc.) are often fat-free. They're high in fiber and rich in protein, and they may be used right from the can to add flavor, color and texture to a variety of meatless meals ranging from salads to casseroles. Beans also have antioxidants; the darker the color, the more antioxidants they have!

Source: American Institute of Cancer Research Newsletter

Folic Acid Vitamin Use by Women Reaches All Time High

According to a survey from the March of Dimes, a record 40 percent of American women of childbearing age reported taking a multivitamin containing folic acid in 2004, up from 32 percent the previous year and the highest level since the March of Dimes began surveying women in the 1990's.

The increase is especially important according to Dr. Jennifer Howse, president of the March of Dimes, because there has been a great deal of concern about the effects on mothers and babies of popular low-carbohydrate diets that drastically reduce grain foods enriched with folic acid. However, the survey finds that 49 percent of women who have been on low-carb diets in the past 6 months said they took a daily multivitamin containing folic acid. Rates of folic acid use were also higher than expected for women not dieting (39 percent). The March of Dimes urges all women to eat a varied, healthy diet before and during pregnancy.

Of women who were not pregnant at the time of the 2004 survey, 37 percent reported taking a vitamin containing folic acid, daily, up from 30 percent in 2003.

Daily consumption of the B vitamin folic acid beginning before pregnancy is crucial because serious birth defects of the brain and spine known as neural tube defects (NTDs) occur in the early weeks following conception, often before a woman knows she is pregnant.

Dr. Howse said the March of Dimes survey found that more women seem to understand the importance of folic acid to the health of babies. However, NTDs are among the most serious birth defects in the United States. Each year an estimated 2,200 babies are born with these defects and additional affected pregnancies result in miscarriage or stillbirth. So we cannot be complacent in our efforts to educate women of childbearing age of the importance of consuming a multivitamin containing at least 400 micrograms of folic acid every day. Women should also consume foods fortified with folic acid such as pasta and bread and foods that naturally contain folic acid such as leafy green vegetables and beans.

Source: www.marchofdimes.com

Sleep Tips for Your Children

Here are some important things you can do to ensure that your child gets enough sleep:

- Set a regular time for bed each night and stick to it.
- Establish a relaxing bedtime routine, such as giving your child a warm bath or a story.
- Make after-dinner playtime a relaxing time. Too much activity close to bedtime can keep children awake.
- Avoid feeding children big meals close to bedtime.
- Avoid giving children anything with caffeine less than six hours before bedtime.
- Set the bedroom temperature so that it's comfortable – not too warm and not too cold.
- Make sure the bedroom is dark. If necessary, use a small nightlight.
- Keep the noise level low.

Source: National Institutes of Health, National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute
<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov>

Safe, Not Sorry!

Knowing what's dishwasher-friendly helps avoid post-party blues

The celebration's over, but the mess still lingers! While it's tempting to toss everything in the dishwasher, the Soap and Detergent Association reminds you that some of your favorite items may not be dishwasher-friendly.

Check the instructions. If you're in doubt about an item, check with the manufacturer to see if it's "dishwasher safe." Your dishwasher manual may also include some guidelines that will help.

No fear! The force and heat of the water can damage fragile pieces. For example, stemware may snap or etched designs can fade. Here are some items that you'll probably want to hand wash: aluminum utensils, cast iron, hand-painted or antique china, crystal, decorated glassware, hollow-handled knives, milk glass, pewter, plastics, silver, and wooden items.

Source: Soap and Detergent Association Online Newsletter

Are Electrical Hazards Cooking in Your Kitchen?

From coffeemakers to toasters, blenders and waffle irons, to microwaves and ovens – today’s modern kitchen has more electrical appliances than ever before. These appliances, like other electrical devices in your home, need to be operated safely and conscientiously in accordance with manufacturers’ guidelines.

As an increasing number of electrical appliances in our homes become necessities of life, our home’s power circuits will grow more overloaded. This puts you and your family at risk. To ensure you don’t have a potential safety hazard brewing in your kitchen, follow these important safety tips:

1. Unplug kitchen appliances, like toasters and coffeemakers, when you’re not using them and never allow appliances like a stove or microwave to remain on when you leave home.
2. Never use a fork, knife or other metal object that conducts electricity to clean debris from “live” kitchen appliances such as toasters and toaster ovens. For routine cleaning, make sure these appliances are switched off and disconnected before you clean their internal parts.
3. Avoid using electricity near water and other liquids. Clean up all spillages in or around an electrical appliance after making sure the power supply has been disconnected. Never submerge an appliance or its electrical cord or plug in water or any other liquid.
4. Install a sufficient number of GFCIs (ground fault circuit interrupters) in your kitchen. GFCIs are designed to prevent shock hazards by interrupting power if electrical current leaks from a damaged cord or appliance.
5. Always check your kitchen appliances for damaged cords or plugs before you use them. Contact with a faulty or frayed power cord or a broken appliance can cause electric shock. If an appliance malfunctions or appears to be damaged in any way, make sure the appliance is disconnected from the power outlet and have it repaired or replaced immediately.
6. Never let power cords or plugs dangle over the edge of counters or come in contact with hot surfaces. Dangling cords are a danger to small children who might pull or grab them. Kitchen appliances should never be placed near a hot gas or electric burner.

Source: Leviton Institute, www.leviton.com

Florida Food Fare

By Jean Meadows

Atemoya

Description: A tropical exotic often called the Florida cherimoya, the atemoya is a member of the *Annonaceae* family. It is a cross between a cherimoya and the Sugar Apple (sweetsop) and is prized throughout the world for its exotic flavor. The fruit has a conical to ovate shape with a rough petal configuration (areoles) on its light green outer surface. In the center of the fruit is a sweet, creamy, rich, vanilla custard-like flavored pulp, with seeds. It is very dense with a real milk flavor. There are 10-40 dark brown or black seeds per fruit.

Availability: Produced mostly in south Florida, atemoya has a short harvest season. The fruit matures in late August through October, with smaller quantities sometimes available through January. The fruit is hand harvested and packed to prevent bruising. It is most apt to be found in small produce markets.

Selection and Care: Fruits often split at the stem end as they ripen so they are harvested when slightly green and allowed to ripen off the tree. They have a limited storage life (5-10 days) but can be held for several days at 55-60 degrees F. to slow ripening. Ripe atemoyas can be kept refrigerated for 3-5 days. Cut fruit stays fresh refrigerated for 1-2 days.

Nutritional Value: Relatively high in calories, it is an excellent source of vitamin C, is high in fiber and low in sodium. One fruit contains: 94 calories, 1.5 gm protein, 24 gm carbohydrates.

Use & Preparation: Primarily consumed as a fresh fruit but the pulp is used in desserts, salads, ice cream and milk shakes. The best way to use an atemoya is to chill it, halve and serve it straight. Spoon out the creamy pulp, discarding the seeds. It can also be cut into tiny pieces and made a part of an exotic fruit cup along with papaya, mango and soft melon. Because of its "nubby" outer surface, atemoyas need to be washed thoroughly using a scrub brush and warm water. Do not use soap; it will leave a residue.

Tropical Trifle

1 pkg lady finger dessert cakes	1/4 cup light rum (or sparkling grape juice)
1 cup fresh orange sections	1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/2 cup atemoya chunks, seeded	1 cup lime marmalade*
2 cups whipping cream	1 cup fresh raspberries or strawberries
1/4 cup confectioners sugar	

In a large brandy snifter, line half of the lady fingers along sides. Layer orange sections and atemoya chunks. Prepare whipping cream, beating until firm peaks are formed. Stir in sugar, rum or grape juice and nutmeg. Spread half of whipped cream over fruit. Layer remaining lady fingers over whipped cream. Spread with marmalade. Sprinkle with fresh berries. Cover with remaining whipped cream. Chill several hours before serving for the maximum flavor. Serves 6-8.

*If lime marmalade is not available, use orange marmalade and add 2 tablespoons lime or lemon zest.
