

From the Nutritionist

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Have a Safe Spring Break

Good nutrition can help you have a better vacation – during Spring Break or any time of year. That doesn't mean you have to follow a strict diet. After all, vacations often include foods that are not part of our usual routine, which can add to the fun. However, things like fatigue, food poisoning, and complications from dehydration can make your vacation less than ideal. Following a few nutrition rules can help you stay safe, healthy and energized so you can make the most of your vacation.

- As it gets close to vacation time, many people are motivated to lose weight. Crash diets that cause quick weight loss are not safe or effective. They are low in energy and nutrients needed for good health, and weight that is lost quickly is mostly water weight, which returns just as fast as it's lost. Use your motivation to make healthy changes you can stick with year round, including a sensible meal plan based on foods from all food groups, balanced with a healthy amount of physical activity.
- When traveling, unusual schedules and limited food choices can make it difficult to keep up with healthy eating routines. This can lead to fatigue, irritability, and digestive issues. Try to eat every 3-5 hours, and look for healthier choices, even at rest stops and airport restaurants. Choose a sandwich instead of a burger, water instead of soda, and fruit instead of fries. You can even put together a balanced meal by combining several healthy snacks together - like hummus with pretzels, baby carrots, and a fruit and yogurt parfait.
- Keep your food safe to prevent food poisoning – one key is to keep cold food cold (under 40 degrees). This can be tricky on road trips or when hanging out at the beach. Don't let food sit out for more than 2 hours (1 hour in temps over 90 degrees) – keep that in mind when deciding whether or not to keep leftovers. Use plenty of ice to keep food cold, and place coolers in the back seat of the car instead of the trunk. Pack easy to transport foods that don't need to be kept cold like trail mix, nuts, cereal, popcorn, peanut butter sandwiches, and fresh fruit.
- When traveling abroad you may encounter unsafe water which can make you sick. Avoid tap water and beverages containing ice. Treated water, drinks made with boiled water and served steaming hot (like coffee and tea) and bottled or canned drinks are safer alternatives. Also use caution with raw fruits and vegetables – follow the Traveler's Mantra: "Cook it, wash it, peel it, or forget it!"
- Dehydration can lead to serious, life threatening complications. You can get dehydrated without feeling it, especially when spending time in water. Keep in mind that alcohol does not keep you hydrated – it's a mild diuretic and adds to dehydration. Avoid dehydration by consuming at least 8 cups of non-alcoholic liquids each day. When sweating due to hot weather or exercise, you'll need to consume even more.

Get more tips for a safe and healthy vacation at the Safe Spring Break Fair, Wednesday, March 9 from 12-3 pm in the Student Life Center lobby.

Andrea Hart, registered dietitian nutritionist and New York State-certified dietitian/nutritionist, is available for free, confidential, one-on-one counseling and as a speaker or facilitator for campus groups, panels or classes.

Contact Andrea: andrea.hart@cortland.edu or call 607-753-5773 with questions or to set up an appointment. Or stop by her office, first floor, Neubig Hall, across from the Neubig Dining cashier.