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Serving the Greater Stuttgart Military Community

Nutrition experts advise on how to shop healthier, cheaper

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Special to The Citizen

March is National Nutrition Month. The American Dietetics Association's 2010 theme, "Building Your Nutrition From the Ground Up," encourages Americans to improve their diet, starting with the basics.

The ADA suggests consuming a wide variety of foods from all the food groups, making calories count with foods low in calories but high in nutrients, and balancing physical activity with healthy eating.

When you walk down the commissary aisles, most of the unhealthy food products are located at eye level, while the more nutritious products are higher on the shelf. It's easier to grab foods that are right in front of you, rather than having to search for

healthier foods.

Two recent online articles from the Readers Digest and RD411 Web sites discussed ways to navigate the aisles of the grocery store for healthier options, while saving time.

- Shop the perimeter of the store for the bulk of your food items. These foods, such as produce, are healthier and full of vitamins and minerals. If you have to, venture to the inner aisles for staple foods.

- Shop with a list. You are more likely to stay focused and on track when you write down what you need. A list prevents you from buying unhealthy choices and unnecessary items.

- Never shop on an empty stomach. You will end up buying more unhealthy food items than you really need, and your grocery bill will increase.

- Buy produce in season. Produce that is bought close to home is fresh,

tastes better and costs less.

- Choose processed foods that have fewer ingredients. Read food labels, and try to stay away from artificial ingredients, or ingredients that you cannot pronounce, including partially-hydrogenated fats and trans fats.

- Check out weekly grocery advertisements, and cut out coupons. This will help keep you within your budget and save you money over time.

- Incorporate fish into your meals at least one or two times per week. Salmon is a fish that is high in omega-3 fatty acids, a good source of protein, and cheaper than most other fish in the market.

- Buy whole grain cereals that are high in fiber. You want to choose whole grain cereals with at least three grams of fiber per serving or more, and less than 10 grams of sugar per serving.

- Think "lean" when buying meats.

Try to find cuts of meat without fat marbling, and trim off any visual fat. For example, beef loin, extra lean ground beef, pork loin, chicken without skin, turkey and seafood without any breading are healthier choices.

- Skip foods and beverages that contain corn syrup and high fructose corn syrup. These items have little nutritional value and "empty calories" from sugar that can cause weight gain.

In order to make the most of your shopping, you will have to pre-plan before you go. So, plan out your week of meals, write out a shopping list, and read food labels at the grocery store. Be sure to stay away from "empty calories" and shop around the perimeter of the commissary for fresher foods.

These are just some of the many ways to start "Building Your Nutrition from the Ground Up" and changing your everyday lifestyle.