

Living Well

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES NEWSLETTER FOR NORTHEAST COLORADO



May-June, 2024

Summer Finance Tips

Summer can come with many expenses: weddings, vacations, summer camps, entertainment for kids not in school, etc. It may be difficult to draw a budget and stick to it with all this going on. Here are some tips to help you find summer entertainment while staying on budget.

- Evaluate your finances – Before planning out your summer, it is important to know where you stand. This can help you determine how much money you can or should spend on each event or activity during the summer.
- Find Summer Freebies – Summer is prime time for street festivals, outdoor concerts, craft fairs and other community events. Bring your own snacks or picnic to save even more.
- Host a Garage Sale – Having a garage sale not only helps you to declutter your house, but it can help you add a little extra spending money to your pocket.
- Visit the Library – Libraries contain lots of great entertainment such as books, movies, kids' programs, story times, etc. Check out their schedule to see if any of these opportunities are interesting to you or your family.
- Walk when Possible – Not only is walking good for your health, but it can help you save on fuel expenses and reduce wear and tear on your vehicle. A nice long walk can help you soak up some vitamin D and get a little fresh air on your way.
- Bring Cash – If you are going somewhere for a day, bring a specific amount of cash with you to use. This can help you realize when you approach your spending limit and prevent you from accidentally overspending.
- Check for Matinee Pricing – Many venues will offer discounted pricing for guests visiting during slower times. Before going somewhere, check to see if they offer a discounted price before buying tickets.
- Look into memberships for some of your families' favorite activities. Sometimes, memberships to a zoo, park, aquarium or museum could pay off in just a couple of visits. If your family could be entertained by multiple visits, consider buying a membership to save money in the long run.

Staying entertained during summer does not have to drain your finances. By examining your finances, creating a budget, and looking for free or inexpensive activities to do, you can ensure you end the summer while maintaining or improving your finances.

Resources: <https://www.nerdwallet.com/article/finance/how-to-have-a-fun-summer-when-your-finances-fall-short>
<https://livesmartcolorado.colostate.edu/summer-staycation/>

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Colorado State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Kit Carson, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington, and Yuma Counties cooperating.

Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.

How do I Dispose of my Unused Medications?

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There can be many reasons we need to dispose of unused medications such as a loved one passing away, discontinued medications, or dose changes.

For whatever the reason may be, it is important to know how to appropriately dispose of medications, specifically narcotics. In this article you will find the appropriate ways to dispose of medications in all forms per Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

For in the home disposal of

Solid drugs (tablets or capsules):

1. Remove from the original container
2. Place into a zip lock bag or a sealable container
3. Add a small amount of water into the container with the medications enough to make a slurry
4. Once into a slurry mix into kitty litter, detergent, liquid soap, vinegar, coffee grounds, or any non-toxic powder or spice to create a distasteful pungent mixture to discourage consumption
5. Seal the zip lock or container and throw into the trash

Liquid drugs:

1. Get a zip lock bag or any sealable container and place the liquid medications into that container
2. Mix medications with kitty litter, detergent, liquid soap, vinegar, coffee grounds, or any non-toxic powder or spice to create a distasteful pungent mixture to discourage consumption
3. Seal zip lock or container and throw into trash

Patches:

1. Remove the patch from original package
2. Fold patch in half and stick to itself
3. Flush the patch down the toilet
4. Patches are the only medication recommended to be flushed down the toilet.

It's important you wear gloves if possible when disposing of medications. If gloves are not available be sure to wash your hands thoroughly after handling.

Be sure to remove or destroy all identifying personal information using a black marker or scratching the label off.

Some areas have locations with a drug take back program where you can drop all unused medications off at the location for proper disposal. You can look up locations at <https://cdphe.colorado.gov/colorado-medication-take-back-program>

Resources:

<https://cdphe.colorado.gov/hm/prep-med-waste-disposal>

Power Surges, Not Hot Flashes!

“Honey, the thermostat is not working! It’s so hot in here!” These thoughts and conversations are common as many women go through different ages and stages of life. Embracing those hot flashes as power surges and knowing how to adapt and adjust to the hot flash symptoms will hopefully help make this stage more enjoyable.



More than 80% of women experience hot flashes during menopause. Hot flashes are defined as transient sensations of heat, sweating, flushing, anxiety, and chills lasting for one to five minutes. They can cause considerable distress especially when severe and frequent. They are one of the most common symptoms of menopause among women, though many do not seek treatment. Women experience hot flashes as they hit the transition phase toward menopause at the beginning of menstrual irregularity. The hot flashes can increase in incidence and severity as women enter menopause and can become more troublesome as time progresses. Research has shown there can be different patterns of when women first experience hot flashes and for how long based on age and ethnicity. This is why it is helpful to understand the symptoms and ways to make them more comfortable. Some women find hot flashes interrupt their daily lives. Sometimes hot flashes happen at night and are called night sweats. You may decide you do not need to change your lifestyle or investigate treatment options because your symptoms are mild, but if these ‘power surges’ bother you, there are steps you can take. Take note of what triggers your hot flashes and how they bother you. This will help you later when making decisions about management of those symptoms.

The management of these symptoms depends on the severity; mild, moderate, or severe. Mild management, which has proven to be helpful, includes use of fans, lowering room temperature, avoiding triggers which may be alcohol and spices, and wearing clothing that are heat and sweat-friendly. There has been mild management success from including vitamin e in low doses or weight loss. Some studies also show cardio exercise helps reduce the frequency of hot flashes. Moderate and severe management of hot flashes becomes much more complicated and can require hormone replacement therapy or other drug treatments. Of course, it is best to consult with your physician when having any of these ‘power surge’ symptoms to create the best treatment plan together. Special considerations must be considered with everyone based on their personal medical history and current medications or treatment options.

Regardless of age, it is important to know the signs and symptoms of hot flashes and options available to reduce those ‘power surge’ disruptions. Being in tune with our body and aware of how we are feeling is important in our overall health and well-being. Knowing that hot flashes are quite common, and we aren’t the only ones dealing with these symptoms, is also important for our mental well-being too. Take care of yourself first and turn the thermostat down!

REFERECES:

[Menopausal Hot Flashes: A Concise Review - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

[The effect of vitamin E on hot flashes in menopausal women - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

[Hot Flashes: What Can I Do? | National Institute on Aging \(nih.gov\)](#)

Essential Food Safety Tips for Summertime Grilling

For many people in the United States, Memorial Day weekend signifies the unofficial start of summer and the beginning of grilling season. As we head into the summer season, many of us look forward to hosting cookouts and spending time with friends and family outdoors. When preparing for gatherings, it’s important to remember food safety is just as important as ensuring everyone gets fed. Whether you are a seasoned griller or just starting out, it’s important to keep some essential food safety tips in mind.



Cleanliness is Key: Start with clean hands before starting your grilling journey. The USDA recommends washing your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling raw meats, poultry, or seafood. Additionally, you will want to make sure all the utensils, cutting boards, and surfaces are clean and sanitized to prevent cross-contamination.

Thaw Safely: Make sure frozen meats or seafood are thoroughly thawed before grilling. The safest method is to place the meat in its packaging or in a sealed container on a plate or tray to catch any juices and let it thaw in the refrigerator overnight. This allows for a slow and controlled thawing process, minimizing bacterial growth risk. Alternatively, you can use the microwave if immediately cooking or cold-water immersion method, but never thaw at room temperature as it increases the risk of bacterial growth.

Use Separate Cutting Boards: To avoid cross-contamination, dedicate separate cutting boards for raw meats, poultry, and seafood. Color-coded cutting boards can help differentiate between different types of foods and minimize the risk of spreading harmful bacteria.

Marinating Safely: Marinating adds flavor to grilled meats and vegetables, but it is essential to do so safely. Always marinate foods in the refrigerator, not on the countertop, to prevent bacteria from spreading. If you plan to use some of the marinade as a sauce, reserve a portion before adding raw meat or poultry to avoid cross-contamination.

Wash Your Produce: Just as you clean your hands and utensils, it is essential to wash fruits and vegetables before grilling, slicing, or eating. Even if you do not plan on eating the peel, rinsing them under clean, running water helps remove dirt and any potential contaminants that may be present.

Separate Raw and Cooked Foods: Keep raw meats, poultry, and seafood separate from ready-to-eat foods, such as salads and fruits, to avoid cross-contamination. Use separate plates and utensils for raw and cooked items, and never reuse utensils that have touched raw meats without washing and sanitizing them first.

Cooking Temperatures: Using a food thermometer is a crucial step in grilling safety. It allows you to accurately measure the internal temperature of your meat, ensuring it reaches the proper internal temperature to kill harmful bacteria and pathogens. This ensures the food you have grilled is safe to eat. The USDA recommends the following safe cooking temperatures: 145°F for whole cuts of beef, pork, lamb, and fish; 160°F for ground meats; and 165°F for poultry.

Keep it Hot or Cold: Once cooked, keep hot foods hot (above 140°F) and cold foods cold (below 40°F) to prevent bacterial growth. If food will be sitting out for an extended period, consider using chafing dishes or ice baths to maintain safe temperatures.

Clean Up Properly: After the grilling festivities have concluded, do not forget about cleanup. Promptly refrigerate or safely store any leftover food to prevent spoilage. Clean the grill thoroughly to remove any grease or residue buildup, and do not overlook cleaning your grilling tools and surfaces to maintain a sanitary cooking environment.

Whether you're new to grilling or an experienced pro, following these food safety guidelines will help you grill with confidence and create memories with friends and family. So go ahead and fire up the grill and soak in those summer vibes while practicing food safety every step of the way.

Resource: <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/safe-temperature-chart>

Adapted from: <https://www.foodsafety.gov/blog/how-grill-safely-summer> <https://schenectady.cce.cornell.edu/health-wellness/food-safety-storage/safe-grilling>

Summer Slide... also known as Summer Learning Loss

Many young children experience a decline or pause in learning over summer break, which some refer to as the Summer Slide. Those losses accumulate especially during the elementary school years and make it difficult for children who start the academic year with achievement levels lower than where they were at the end of the previous school year. Repetition and practice of newly acquired skills are essential to these young learners. So, what can parents do to help combat the learning loss and help their child retain skills? The first recommendation is communicating with your child's teacher for a more specific and detailed list of activities. You can also support your child's summer learning by the following activities.



Reading Activities

Read with your child daily – When you read to your child, they hear the rhythm of language. Be sure to read with expression! Have fun changing your voice for different characters and have your child join in. Don't forget to talk about the book by asking Who, What, Where, When, Why, or How. If you are reading nonfiction, have your child share interesting facts they learned. Reading recipes or directions is a great way to incorporate reading each day.

Visit your local library – Choose library days and help your child find “right fit” books. These are books they are interested in and not beyond their independent reading level. Some libraries have special events or activities, so inquire and see what is happening at the library this summer.

Read poetry or plays – Reading poetry helps your child work on their fluency and rhythm. Readers Theater is fun and interactive activity plus it helps build fluency and cadence skills.

Play word games – Make flash cards for vocabulary, sight words, and letters. Search bookstores or online for ideas. Your child can even learn words or letters with a game of hopscotch or 4 square.

Online reading sites – Check with your child's teacher for a list of online reading resources your child is currently participating in. Listening to online books supports fluency skills.

Listen to music – When you are listening to music, discuss song lyrics with your child. Think about the story of the song, follow rhyming schemes, find similes and metaphors. If your child has a favorite song, print out a copy of the song lyrics. Look for parts of speech, figurative language, etc. The learning possibilities are endless.

Mathematics Activities

Keep your change – Bring out your spare change and have your child identify, sort, and practice counting coins. Whenever possible, let your child pay cash for small transactions. When they receive the change, have them compare the amount the cashier gave to the expected amount.

Practice with analog and digital clocks – Throughout the day, have your child practice telling time on an analog clock. Flash cards can be made and have your child match an analog with a digital clock. As a challenge, practice elapsed time.

Calculate when you will arrive at your destination – When your child asks, “Are we there yet?”, challenge them to figure out how many more miles you need to drive by looking for road signs and how long it will take depending upon the speed limit.

Writing Activities

Write cards, letters, or in a journal – Summertime can be a wonderful time to have your child work on their handwriting. Some options are writing a card or letter to a friend or family member. This will also give them practice with addressing an envelope. Help your child remember all their summer experiences in their own journal.

Draw a picture and write about it – Incorporate art by having your child draw a picture and write about it. They can draw what they see around them, a scene from a book or movie, or a fun summertime activity. Writing can be a fun way to express their creativity. Have fun and write a made-up story!

Learning doesn't happen just at school. You can help your child maintain and continue their learning during the summer with these fun activities. Real-life essential skills and hands-on activities will be the most beneficial. Remember to keep it fun and engaging!

Gardening with Kids – Good for the Body, Mind and Soul



The benefit – even necessity – for both youth and adults to spend time outdoors is interesting. For kids, studies show those who play outside are wiser, happier, more attentive and less anxious than kids who spend a greater amount of time indoors. It is still unclear exactly how the cognitive functioning and mood improvements occur, but we know nature builds confidence in kids, promotes creativity and imagination, teaches responsibility, provides different stimulation, gets kids moving, makes them think, and reduces stress and fatigue. Spending time outdoors gardening can also be a great way to encourage kids to eat a healthy diet and serve as an outdoor classroom for showing how and where our food comes from while connecting them to nature and the environment. Even the littlest ones love to learn about dirt, plants and bugs.

If the thought of gardening seems overwhelming, remember it doesn't have to be a perfectly level, large plot of land. It can take place in small, raised beds, a trellis against an outside wall for things such as beans or other edible vines, or a few containers of soil in a sunny spot.

When it comes time to plant, older kids can read the planting instructions and help determine when to plant, how deep and how far apart. Smaller kids need larger seeds to plant for their smaller fingers to handle. Good choices are peas, beans, pumpkin and other squash, cucumbers and sunflowers. These plants also germinate and grow quickly which makes them interesting to watch and good ones to use to add a little math while gardening by measuring how much they grow from week to week or counting the blooms on each plant. Kids can create plant tags or use pictures for non-readers. Planting a theme garden like a pizza garden, salsa garden or one with rainbow-colored vegetables can be fun and even enticing for the pickiest of eaters to try something new they have grown themselves.

Not only will the fresh fruits and vegetables kids eat from the garden have positive effects on their bodies, but digging in the dirt can too. The ‘hygiene hypothesis’ is a theory that a lack of childhood exposure to germs actually increases a child's susceptibility to disease such as asthma, allergies and autoimmune conditions by suppressing the development of the immune system. Kids love to get their hands and feet in dirt, and getting dirty while gardening may strengthen their immune system and health. Digging in the dirt, along with activities like moving soil, carrying a watering can, and pushing a wheelbarrow can promote gross motor skills and overall strength too.

Kids also need time for meaningful family connection. Gardening allows for team building, promotes communication, provides opportunities for learning and sharing, and can give kids a sense of purpose and responsibility. Making stepping stones, identifying the good and bad bugs, assembling a weather station to keep track of your backyard weather, personalizing pumpkins by scratching names on the skin of the young fruit and watching the names grow, making mudpies, and wheelbarrow rides are just a few examples of the fun things a family can do in the garden.

Program Highlight

Matter of Balance is an eight-week program designed to reduce the fear of falling and increase activity levels among older adults. Participants will learn to view falls and the fear of falling as controllable, set realistic goals for increasing activity, change their environment to reduce fall risk factors, and promote exercise to increase strength and balance. In March, volunteers from Washington, Yuma and Logan counties attended a Coach Training to be able to deliver the program. If you are interested in attending a class or becoming a coach, please contact Katie Seelhoff at (970) 542-3544 or Katie.seelhoff@colostate.edu.



Upcoming Events!

- **Food Preservation Workshop --**
 - Morgan County Extension will hold a food preservation workshop on Saturday, June 8th at the Extension office. The morning will cover water bath canning and the afternoon will cover pressure canning. To RSVP or for more questions, contact Katie Seelhoff at Katie.seelhoff@colostate.edu or (970) 542-3544
- **ServSafe Spanish Handler Training –**
 - Wednesday, June 5th from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., Burlington Center in Burlington. For more information or to register, contact Joy Akey at (970) 332-4151 or joy.akey@colostate.edu
- **ServSafe Manager Training –**
 - Tuesday, June 11th from 8:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m., Washington County Event Center in Akron. For more information or to register, contact Joy Akey at (970) 332-4151 or joy.akey@colostate.edu.

Be sure to check our Facebook page listed below to stay up to date on all our upcoming events.



CSU Extension – NE Colorado FCS: <https://www.facebook.com/CSUExtensionNortheastFCS>

CSU Extension – Phillips County: <https://www.facebook.com/PhillipsCountyExtension/>

CSU Extension – Logan County: https://www.facebook.com/csuextensionlogancounty/?_tn=%2Cd%2CP-R&eid=ARCS5-NbtiQryVnN5X513c5--hwVu-1ZfnhynwZsPotP7AZIVStJaoCEoaVYzZjBFhCH0tHJLHaJxQuQ

CSU Extension – Morgan County: <https://www.facebook.com/extensionmorgancounty/>