Health/Education

Have a happy Easter

College-bound students should register for ACT exam by May 5th

CONTRIBUTED STORY
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The next ACT Assessment will be administered nationwide on June 10th, 2000. College-bound high school students must register for the college admissions and placement exam by May 5th the deadline for having your registration postmarked. There is a late registration postmark deadline of May 19th, but an extra fee is charged for late registrations. ACT scores are accepted by virtually all U.S. colleges and universities, including all Ivy League schools, and are used along with other students information, such as high school grade point average, for admissions decisions and to help place students in appropriate courses for their academic achievement. The test fee is $22 ($25 in Florida).

Students can register for the ACT by getting information from their high school counselors or online at ACT's website – www.act.org. The website also has helpful information, sample tests and the opportunity to order test prep materials including an interactive CD-ROM, Active Prep, which contains actual, timed tests and help students build a study plan. The ACT Assessment is given in all 50 states. It is curriculum-based, designed to measure a student's academic achievement and the appropriate course level for college placement. There are four sections to the exam" English, reading, math and science reasoning.

Kids and Easter: A health Q & A session

Q: Are the eggs collected during Easter egg hunts safe to eat?

A: Unless you know they have been handled properly, it's best to treat colorful Easter eggs as disposable decorations, not food, said Janice Baranwki, a research dietitian with the USDA/ARS Children's Nutrition Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. Most people are aware that raw and uncooked eggs pose a food poisoning risk. But few realize that hard-cooked eggs are also very perishable and need to be treated with care.

Eggshells are very porous, which is why most commercially produced eggs are coated with a thin protective layer of mineral oil. Cooking removes this coating, leaving hard-cooked eggs vulnerable to bacterial contamination.

Although the risk of food-borne illness from hard-cooked eggs is small. The following precautions will help keep Easter eggs safe to eat:

Remember the two-hour rule" Two hours is the maximum total time that a perishable food can exposed to temperatures over 40 degrees and still be safe to eat

Wash hands thoroughly before and after handling raw or cooked eggs.

To cook large eggs: Cover with at least one inch of water. Bring to a boil. Remove from heat and cover. Let stand 15 to 17 minutes. Rinse with cold water. Refrigerate if not decorating immediately.

To color: Only use dyes that are safe for use on food. Follow package directions.

Refrigerate decorated eggs until time for the hunt.

Avoid hiding eggs where they can come into contact with animals, insects or lawn chemicals.

After the hunt: Don't eat cracked eggs or those that have been in temperatures over 40 degrees for more than two hours. If not eaten immediately, eggs should be refrigerated and used within seven days.

For more information on egg safety, call the USDA's Meats and Poultry hotline, (800)-535-4555.

Q: Won't giving children Easter candy promote poor eating habits?

A: Banning the Easter bunny could backfire by making sweets seem more desirable, said Dr. Theresa Nicklas. Children who feel deprived of sweets might actually become secret eaters who consume lots of candy when parents aren't around.

According to Nicklas, as long as a child's overall diet includes adequate amounts of fruits, vegetables, dairy products, whole grains and meats, a small, sweet treat after a meal is a harmless pleasure. It's when sweets replace these food in a child's diet that parents should be concerned. Although letting children have occasional sweets after meals is fine, Nicklas discourages using sweets as a reward.

To help limit the amount of candy children receive, consider adding kid-friendly non-food

Q: What does the" % Daily Value" on food labels mean?

A: The numbers listed under the "% Daily Value" on food labels reflect the relative amount of 10 important nutrients that one serving of a food contains, say nutritionists at the USDA/ARS.

Because some of nutrients the FDA chose to require on food labels did not have an established Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA), the Daily Value was created. The FDA set the Daily Values for protein, vitamins A and C, iron and calcium at the highest levels of the RDAs in places where food-labeling laws went into effect.

Those for fiber, sodium, cholesterol, saturated fat and total fat were set at the level recommended for healthy adults consuming a 2,000-calorie diet. This translates into Daily Value standards of 50 g. protein, 18 mg. iron, 1,000 mg. calcium, 5,000 IU vitamin A, 60 mg. vitamin C, 25 g. fiber, 300 mg. cholesterol, 2,400 mg. Sodium, 20 g. saturated fat and 65 mg. total fat. Nutrient content on food labels is expressed as a percentage of these Daily Values to allow consumers to make informed purchasing decision without knowing their actual nutritional requirements.

For example, the label on a can of ready-to-eat chicken noodle soup shows that a one-cup serving has 850 mg. of sodium and a %DV of 35.