

## *Answers from Amy*

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### **NEW FCS AGENT**

Hello all! My name is Amy Kress and I am the new FCS County Extension Agent in Floyd County. I am originally from Garland, TX, a large suburb of Dallas, however I am not new to West Texas. I graduated this past May from Texas Tech with my Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Communications. Along with performing duties related to FCS programs in the county, I am the 4-H coordinator for Floyd County 4-H. I was not lucky enough to be involved in 4-H when I was younger but I am so happy to be a part of it now and am learning as I go. I am very excited to be in Floyd County and would like to provide as much help as I can to this great community. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to call the Extension Office.

### **WATER CONSERVATION:**

#### **HOW DOES YOUR HOME CHECK OUT?**

The availability of water, now and in the future, should be a concern for everyone. In most areas of the country and most of the time, water has been readily available. The situation is changing. There are constantly new demands on our water supply. Sometimes that supply may be less than at other times because of climatic conditions such as a drought, a disaster, or just a breakdown in the water system.

Conserving water also conserves other resources—energy and money. It costs money to pump water and make it available in our homes, for irrigation, and for business and industrial uses. Energy is required to pump, move and to purify water. Both energy and money are required to heat water—whether it is the water we heat and use, or the water we heat and waste through poor management practices.

By becoming more aware of your water use habits—both old and new—you can reduce water use (consumption), eliminate waste, and save energy and money.

How much water do you use in a day? A gallon? Do you use 25, 50 or even 100 or more gallons? Few people know how much they use. Studies show wide variation in the amount of water used by rural and urban households.

Water use ranges from 66 to 118 gallons per person per day, with urban households using larger amounts.

Imagine what it would be like to turn on the tap and not get at least a drop of water. People in some parts of the country know this does happen. They are learning how to conserve water. They know that water is a limited resource. Water shortages are now a local and regional problem. Some day they may be a national problem. It is wise to learn now how to conserve water.

This checklist is designed to help you see how effectively you are using water, and to alert you to ways to save. Some actions suggested are more severe than others and would need to be implemented only in an emergency situation—and are indicated as such.

As you read this list, check the steps you have already taken to conserve water. Note what you still need to do to become a better manager of water resources. Concentrate on the big water uses first.

- \*Inspect the plumbing system to see that there are no leaks.

- \*Install reduced-flow showerheads (2.5 gallons/minute).

- \*Limit the amount of shower water by the way you use the controls for the hot and cold water faucets, or a mixer faucet.

- \*Turn off all water if you are going to be away from home on a vacation or trip. This keeps children from turning on outside faucets while you are away.

- \*Check to see how often your home water softening equipment regenerates and backwashes. It can use as much as 100 gallons of water each time it does this. You may want to cut down on the use of such equipment. Reserve softened water for kitchen use, bathing, and laundry. Use unsoftened water for all other purposes. (This may require a bypass line but this is advisable under all circumstances).

- \*Insulate hot water pipes. Having to clear the “hot” line of cooled water is wasteful.

- \*Install a circulating hot water system.

- \*Check all faucets, inside and out, for drips. Make repairs promptly. These problems get worse—never better.

- \*Teach children to turn water faucets off quickly and

tightly after each use.

\*A toilet leak can waste lots of water. Put a small amount of food coloring into the tank. If the color trickles into the bowl, there is a leak and repairs are needed.

\*Replace existing toilets with 1.6 gallons/flush toilets.

\*Water required to flush some older 3.5 to 7 gallons/flush toilet can be reduced. Experiment by placing a quart plastic (not glass) bottle filled with water in the flush tank to save 1 quart of water per flush. (Don't use a brick to fill space in your toilet flush tank. Particles from the brick could damage the valve.)

\*Or, adjust the float level of the toilet to reduce the amount of water necessary to flush the toilet. Do this carefully to avoid damaging the system. Try only a slight adjustment.

\*Never use the toilet as a trash basket for facial tissues, etc.

Emergency Situations:

\*When the toilet needs flushing, use gray water saved from cleaning, bathing, etc. Put the water in the toilet bowl—not the flush tank. If the system loses pressure, gray water, if placed in the tank, could back-siphon into the system and contaminate the drinking water.

Source: Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

## **STRETCHING YOUR FOOD DOLLAR**

### **Food Shopping Starts at Home**

Most of us can change our food spending habits in ways that make each food dollar go further and still improve nutrition. Before dashing out to the supermarket, it is important to do your homework. Take the time to review newspaper ads, plan meals, and make a shopping list. By doing so, you are more likely to find the best buys, avoid impulse purchases, and eliminate extra trips for forgotten items.

Check newspaper ads for special sales. Planning your meals around specials and seasonal foods can help save money. Compare advertised prices among stores to find where you can save the most on your entire shopping list. Buy only what you can use and compare prices with those found in other ads. Be aware that specials and coupon offers invite you to buy impulsively. And impulsive buying can blow your budget. Even at special prices and with refunds or coupons, some foods may not be within your budget.

Clip coupons. You can save money if the item is one you would normally buy and if the item is less expensive than similar brands. Most cents-off coupons offered by manufacturers or stores are for the more expensive, highly processed foods or for foods in abundant supply. But using coupons for coffee, prepared foods, cereals, flour,

and flour mix products can save about 10% in most food budgets. Do not use a coupon to justify buying a food that your family does not need or that costs more than a store brand, even with the coupon savings.

Plan the use of leftovers. When safely handled, leftovers can be used in casseroles, soups, for snacks, and in lunch boxes. If there is food waste in your household, ask yourself why. Are you buying food in the right quantities? Is food refused or left on the plate? Are servings too large? Is the food cooked properly? Encourage family members to help in menu planning and meal preparation so you will have help in making decisions that affect the eating pleasure of the entire family.

### **Making a Shopping List**

One of the best ways to control spending and avoid impulse buying is to make a list of the items needed. Having already planned your menus, the rest is easy. Some helpful hints for making a shopping list follow:

\*Keep an ongoing list and jot down items as your supply gets low.

\*Look over the recipes you plan to use. Be sure you have the necessary ingredients.

\*Check the cupboards, the refrigerator, and the freezer for foods on hand. Are there staple items such as flour, sugar, coffee, salt, rice, which should be added to the list?

\*If storage space permits, stock up on sale items used regularly.

\*Organize your list according to the store layout. This will save you time and reduce the temptation to buy foods not on your list. This method is especially helpful in larger supermarkets or warehouse stores where backtracking is time consuming.

### **When Your Shopping is Done**

Go straight home after grocery shopping so perishable foods can be refrigerated or kept frozen so food spoilage will not be a problem. Warm temperatures are the leading cause of food spoilage, so refrigerate or freeze all perishable foods immediately after shopping.

When you get home from the store, compare your register receipt with your food cost goal. Then check your purchases carefully and critically. Are they economical when compared with other choices you might have made? Did you buy some foods not on your list? Can these extras be justified as important for meeting food needs, being real bargains, or providing a worthwhile tasty treat?

Source: eXtension

# PREPARE FOR THE FLU

Here is practical advice to help you and your family prepare for the flu season, which occurs every year from October to May.

## Make a Plan

- Prepare a written plan for yourself and your family.
- Plan for an extended stay at home.
- Determine how you will care for your children and other dependent relatives.
- Make alternative work arrangements, such as telecommuting.
- Ask your employer about a business continuity plan for the flu.

## Build a Kit

- Keep at least a 2-week supply of flu-fighting essentials (water, food, medication, tissue, etc.) to help care for yourself and your family.

## Stay Informed

- Access reliable news, radio, and Internet sources.
- Visit [texasflu.org](http://texasflu.org), [flu.gov](http://flu.gov), and [texashelp.tamu.edu](http://texashelp.tamu.edu) on the Web.
- Dial 211 to learn about local resources, such as where to get a flu shot, where to find a doctor, and answers to general flu questions.
- Contact your county office of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service.

## Enhance Your Immunity

- Get your annual flu shot in the fall for a full season of protection.
- Have healthy lifestyle habits.
  - Eat a balanced diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables.
  - Get plenty of rest. Sleep at least 7 to 8 hours a night.
  - Exercise regularly—at least 30 minutes of activity most days of the week.
  - Reduce your daily stress level—plan ahead, start projects early, prioritize activities, and delegate tasks.

## Wash Your Hands

The single most effective way to prevent the spread of contagious illnesses, like the flu.

- Wash regularly for at least 20 seconds, rubbing your hands together briskly while using soap and warm water.
- Use a hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol when water is not available. Hand sanitizers do not remove surface dirt or other debris; therefore, wash hands as soon as running water is available.

## Clean and Disinfect

- First, clean your household with detergent and water to remove surface dirt and other debris.
- Then, sanitize common areas with a disinfectant to kill germs, such as an
  - EPA-registered disinfectant, or a
  - dilute bleach solution.

## Cover Your Cough or Sneeze

- Cough or sneeze into the sleeve of your upper arm or the crook of your elbow.
- Use disposable tissues when available.
- Wash your hands after sneezing into a tissue or blowing your nose.
- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose, and mouth.

## Keep Your Distance

- Remain at home when sick to prevent the spread of the flu.
  - Do not return to school or work until your fever is below 100 F for at least 24 hours without using fever-reducing medicine.\*
- Stay 3 to 6 feet away from others who are sick.
- Avoid kissing and hugging others while ill.

\*Fever-reducing medicine includes Acetaminophen (Tylenol, generic brand), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, generic brand), and aspirin. Do not give aspirin to anyone age 20 or younger because of the danger of Reye's syndrome, a rare but serious illness.

For more information about the flu, visit the Texas Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) website at [texashelp.tamu.edu](http://texashelp.tamu.edu)

Source: Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service  
Joseph E. Pena  
July 2010

# THE ABCS OF CHILD SAFETY SEATS

Nationwide, more young children die each year as passengers in vehicle crashes than from any disease or other kinds of unintentional injuries combined! In Texas, nearly half of the children under 12 years old who were killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes were reported as unrestrained. (TX Department of Transportation, Crash Data Analysis and Statistics 2009)

Children in rear-facing safety seats should NEVER be placed in the front seat of cars equipped with passenger-side air bags. The impact of a deploying air bag striking a rear-facing child safety seat could result in serious or fatal injury to the child.

\*Children under 13 should always ride in the back seat! Because of their high center of gravity and delicate bone structures, infants and toddlers are extremely susceptible to injury in vehicle crashes when not restrained.

\*Child safety seats are effective when installed and used correctly.

\*Check compatibility of a vehicle and child safety seat before making a purchase.

### **Best Practice**

STEP 1 – REAR-FACING – All infants and toddlers should ride in rear-facing car safety seats until they are 2 years old or until they reach the highest weight or height limit allowed by their seat.

STEP 2 – FORWARD-FACING – All children 2 years or older, or those younger than 2 who have outgrown the rear-facing weight or height limit for their seat should use a forward-facing seat with a harness for as long as possible, up to the highest weight or height allowed by their seat.

STEP 3 – BOOSTER SEATS – All children whose weight or height is above the forward-facing limit for their seat should use a belt-positioning-booster seat until the vehicle lap/shoulder belt fits properly, typically when they reach 4'9" tall at 8–12 years old.

STEP 4 – SEAT BELTS – When children are old enough and large enough to use the vehicle seat belt alone, they should always use lap/shoulder belts for optimal protection.

### **ALL CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 13 YEARS SHOULD BE RESTRAINED IN THE REAR SEAT OF VEHICLES.**

\*Start early – bring your baby home from the hospital in a child safety seat and never put your baby in a vehicle without one. Children who always ride in a safety seat will not question the practice and will always ride safely.

\*Be consistent – there are no excuses, always buckle your child. Never confuse your child by not using the child safety seat. Allowing your child to get out of the safety seat when he/she cries or is fussy only teaches the child to control you.

\*Use words – as your infant becomes a toddler and starts using language, explain in simple words that your family rule is that everyone buckles up.

\*Model good behavior – children copy parents all the time. By buckling up every time you get in the car, you set the example you want them to follow.

\*Boredom monster – the boredom monster may strike at any time. To keep your child busy, have a bag of soft travel toys, books, and activities used only in the car.

\*Be firm – nearly every child will try at some point to get out of the safety seat. Don't panic! Stop the car at a safe location. Talk to your child in a firm, serious voice and then re-buckle the child safety seat.

\*Clue in grandparents – safety seat products have changed, laws have changed, and knowledge has changed. Grandparents need to know the importance of using safety seats, have rules for grandchildren in their vehicles, and know how to properly install and use child safety seats.

\*Be comforting – Talk about what you see. Play games, hum, sing, or listen to a favorite CD. On long trips, stop every hour or so to change positions, diapers, or feed the child.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics, Policy Statement, April 2011.

Pointers for Happy Children in Safety Seats

### **SECTION 545.412: CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY SEAT SYSTEMS – Sept. 2009**

#### **OFFENSE:**

A person commits an offense if the person operates a passenger vehicle, transports a child who is younger than eight [five] years of age, unless the child is taller than four feet, nine inches [and less than 36 inches in height], and does not keep the child secured during the operation of the vehicle in a child passenger safety seat system according to the instructions of the manufacturer of the safety seat system.

#### **PENALTY:**

I. An offense under this provision is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of not less than \$100 or more than \$200.

(b) An offense under this section is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of not ~~less than \$100 or~~ more than \$25 for the first offense and not more than \$250 for a second or subsequent offense [\$200].

(b-1) In addition to all other fees and court costs, a person shall pay 15 cents as a court cost on conviction of an offense under this section. Court costs due under this section shall be collected in the same manner as other fees, fines, or costs are collected in the case. The clerk at least monthly shall send the court costs collected under this section to the comptroller for deposit in a separate account in the general revenue fund that may be appropriated only to the Texas Department of Transportation and used to purchase child passenger safety seat systems and distribute them to low-income families.

(1) the offense may be prosecuted only if the offense occurs on or after June 1, 2010; and

(2) before June 1, 2010, a law enforcement officer may not arrest or issue a notice to appear to a person committing the offense, but may issue to the person a warning to comply with Section 545.412, Transportation Code. this Act takes effect September 1, 2009.

# PUMPKIN RECIPES TO GET YOU THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS

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## PUMPKIN FRUIT ROLL UPS

1 cup pumpkin pie mix  
1 cup unsweetened apple sauce

Liberally spray 15 x 1 x 1 inch non-stick jelly roll pan with a no-stick cooking spray, or line bottom and sides with foil. In a medium bowl, combine pie mix and apple sauce. Spread mixture evenly over bottom of pan; smooth with spatula. Dry in 150 degree oven for 8 to 10 hours, or until surface is no longer sticky to touch. Remove from oven; cool slightly. Loosen edges with metal spatula. Starting at narrow end, lift up corners, peel back slowly. If foil liner is used peel off foil. Cut into desired length, roll up, and wrap in plastic wrap.

## SKINNY PUMPKIN SPICED LATTE

1 1/2 cups fat free milk  
2 tablespoons pumpkin butter  
2 teaspoons vanilla extract  
1/2 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice  
2 teaspoons sugar or sugar substitute (to taste)  
1/4 cups of espresso (1/2 cup strong brewed coffee)  
fat free whipped topping  
pumpkin pie spice for topping

In a small pan combine milk, pumpkin butter, pumpkin pie spice, and sugar and cook on medium heat, stirring, until boiling. Remove from heat, stir in vanilla. Using an immersion blender, blend until smooth (or whisk well with a wire whisk).

Pour into two mugs, add hot espresso and top with fat free whipped cream and a dash of pumpkin pie spice on top.

## PUMPKIN FACE SLOPPY JOES

1 pound ground beef  
1/2 cup chopped onion  
1 clove minced garlic  
1 cup canned pumpkin  
1 8 oz can tomato sauce  
American cheese slices  
2 tablespoons packed brown sugar  
2 tablespoons prepared mustard

2 teaspoons chili powder  
1 teaspoon salt  
8 hamburger buns

In large skillet, brown meat; drain. Add onion and garlic, cook until tender. Stir in pumpkin, tomato sauce, sugar, chili powder and salt. Heat to boil; reduce heat and simmer 10 minutes. Cover bottom half of each bun with meat mixture. Top with cheese cut outs to make pumpkin face. Broil cheese slightly. Serve.

## ROASTED PUMPKIN SEEDS

Pumpkin Seeds	Paprika
Vegetable oil	Chili Powder
Onion Powder	Kosher Salt
Garlic Powder	Pepper
Sugar	

Preheat oven to 400F. Place pumpkin seeds on a cake pan or baking sheet. Drizzle with a little oil. Sprinkle with remaining ingredients to taste. Toss well. Bake, uncovered, about 30 minutes or until seeds are dry and toasted.

## PUMPKIN PEANUTTY SPREAD

1/2 cup solid pack pumpkin  
1/2 peanut butter  
2 tablespoons honey  
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon  
2 tablespoons chopped peanuts  
celery sticks  
carrot sticks  
apple slices

Combine pumpkin, peanut butter, honey, and cinnamon.; mix well. Chill. Before serving, top with nuts. Serve with vegetables and fruit dippers.

**FOR MORE PUMPKIN RECIPES, CONTACT  
THE FLOYD COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICE.**

Answers From Amy is a publication of the Floyd County Texas A&M Extension Service.

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