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March—National Nutrition Month—is a Good Time to Renew Healthy-Eating Efforts

Brewster, NY—Making healthy food choices is important year round, but March—National Nutrition Month—is a good time to renew efforts to eat nutritious foods and maintain a healthy weight. In an era of fast food and increasing “screen time” spent in front of computers and television, this is not an easy task. National rates of overweight and obesity have increased to include two thirds of the population, and associated health problems—diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure—are also on the rise. Children too are at similar risk, with poor self-image, insecurity and potential learning problems all possible results.

Eating right doesn’t have to be complicated and the Putnam County Department of Health has joined the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, promoting this year’s theme, to advocate simple ways to “get your plate in shape,” including:

- Start by filling at least half your plate with fruits and vegetables. Eat a colorful variety, especially dark green, red and orange colors of produce.
- Eat grains at most meals, choosing whole grains at least half of the time.
- Select lean protein at most meals too. Aim for a variety of protein-rich foods over the course of a week, and include items such as seafood, beans, eggs and nuts, as well as lean meat and poultry.
- Use low-fat or fat-free dairy products. If unable to consume dairy, include other calcium-fortified foods or beverages.
- In general, enjoy a variety of foods, savor your meals and avoid oversize portions.

Other healthy-eating recommendations include avoiding or limiting “empty calories” and high

sodium, processed foods. For example, drink water instead of sugary drinks; select fruit for dessert; switch from solid fats to oils when preparing food, compare labels and choose lower sodium options; and eat only occasionally foods with major sources of saturated fats, such as desserts, pizza, cheese, sausages and hot dogs.

For tips on increasing variety in your diet, log in and follow the Putnam County Department of Health on Facebook. Each day a new cookbook title, written by Board members of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, will be touted. Join the fun and suggest your own cookbook favorites and be eligible for a free raffle for a high quality pedometer at the end of Nutrition Month.

For additional information on eating right and incorporating healthy lifestyle practices, please visit the Putnam County *Live Healthy Putnam* website at www.putnamcountyny.com/livehealthyputnam/index.htm or the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics website www.eatright.org .

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