



# AgriLIFE EXTENSION

Texas A&M System

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### FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES NEWSLETTER

Houston County Extension Office, 401 E. Goliad Ave, #102 Crockett, TX 75835

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You can help prevent the flu! How? Hand washing may seem like a simplistic way to combat the spread of contagious disease, but it works.....if you know how to do it correctly.

#### How to Wash Your Hands:

- ♦ Use warm water. Wash hands for longer if no warm water is available.
- ♦ Use liquid or bar soap. Antibacterial soap is not necessary.
- ♦ Rub your hands together vigorously, producing friction.
- ♦ Work the soap and water into a lather from wrists to fingertips.
- ♦ Wash for at least 15 seconds. About the amount of time it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" or "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" two times fast.
- ♦ Dry your hands thoroughly with a clean towel or paper towel.
- ♦ Use the towel to turn off the water faucet.
- ♦ If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer\*  
(Always keep alcohol-based hand sanitizer out of the reach of children)



#### When You Must Wash Your Hands

- ♦ Before and after preparing meals, eating and drinking
- ♦ After using the restroom, changing diapers, handling trash or pets
- ♦ After caring for other who are ill or after sneezing or blowing your nose.



## TIPS ON HOW TO REPAIR YOUR CREDIT HISTORY

There are two ways to repair your credit history: do it yourself or use a credit counseling agency.



### Repairing Credit on Your Own

- Start by contacting credit agencies to get a copy of your credit report.
- If there are errors on your credit report, you can contact the credit reporting agency to request an investigation.
- Contact your lenders to renegotiate payment plans.
- Opt out of receiving unsolicited offers for credit cards to avoid the temptation of applying for them.

### Repairing Credit Using Credit Counseling Agencies

If you decide to use a credit counseling agency, the Federal Trade Commission provides the following tips for choosing a credit counseling agency and questions to ask regarding services, fees, and repayment plans.

- Interview several credit counseling agencies before signing a contract.
- Check with your state attorney general, local consumer protection agency, and the Better Business Bureau to find out if consumers have filed complaints about the agency you are considering. A reputable agency will send you free information about itself and the service it provides without requiring you to provide any details about your situation. If the agency will not do this, find another agency.
- Ask questions about services, fees, and a repayment plan.



### Questions to Ask a Credit Counseling Agency

#### Services and Fees:

- What services do you offer?
- Do you have educational materials? If so, will you send them to me? Are they free? Can I access them on the Internet?
- In addition to helping me solve my immediate problem, will you help me develop a plan for avoiding problems in the future?
- What are your fees? Do I have to pay anything before you can help me? Are there monthly fees? What is the basis for the fees?
- What is the source of your funding?
- Will I have a formal written agreement or contract with you?
- How soon can you take my case?
- Who regulates, oversees, or licenses your agency? Is your agency audited?
- Will I work with one counselor or several?
- What are the qualifications of your counselors? Are they accredited or certified? If not, how are they trained?
- What assurance do I have that information about me (including my address and phone number) will be kept confidential?

#### Repayment Plan:

- How much debt must I have to use your services?

- How do you determine the amount of my payment? What happens if this is more than I can afford?
- How does your debt repayment plan work? How will I know my creditors have received payments? Is client money put into a separate account from operating funds?
- How often can I get status reports on my accounts? Can I get access to my accounts online or by phone?
- Can you get my creditors to lower or eliminate interest and finance charges or waive late fees?
- Is a debt repayment plan my only option?
- What if I can't maintain the agreed-upon plan?
- What debts will be excluded from the debt repayment plan?
- Will you help me plan for payment of these debts?
- Who will help me if I have problems with my accounts or creditors?
- How secure is the information I provide to you?
- Will this appear on my credit report?

## 7 steps to a Healthy Home



### **1. Control moisture.**

Keeping a home dry helps control mold and pests, and it discourages dust mites.



### **3. Ventilate to improve indoor air quality.**

Windows that open and exhaust fans can help remove pollutants and control humidity.



### **2. Clean regularly.**

A clean house is a healthier house. Clean your home often. Dust provides food for mold, insects, rodents, and dust mites. Keep the clutter down. Clutter makes it difficult to clean and it may serve as food for pests.



### **4. Keep it free of combustion by-products.**

Furnaces, water heaters, and fireplaces that burn fuel must vent to the outside. Stoves, ovens, and cook-tops that burn fuel must be used with fans that vent the combustion by-products to the outside. Invest in a Carbon Monoxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) Detector.



### **6. Remove toxic chemicals.**

Control the cleaning compounds, pesticides, oil or alkyd based paints, and solvents that are used in your home. It is best not to store these products inside the home.



### **5. Keep it pest free.**

Food and water attract pests. Storing food properly and repairing water leaks helps to minimize pests. Sealing the points where pests enter the home can also minimize pests.



### **7. Keep it comfortable.**

Try to maintain a comfortable temperature and humidity level in your home while conserving energy . Set your thermostat a couple of degrees warmer in summer and cooler in winter or invest in a thermostat with a programmable timer.





# Kitchen Tips



Lower oven temp by 25 degrees when using glass baking dishes. Glass heats more quickly and re-

Scaling a fish is easier if you rub vinegar on the scales first

Over beating cheesecake batter incorporates too much air and can cause the cheesecake to crack when baking.



Achieve a professional look (silky and molten) with your decorated cake by blow drying the frosting with a hair dryer until the frosting melts slightly

Chocolate baked goods such as cakes, cookies, brownies, ect...will taste even more chocolaty If you add a small amount of brewed coffee to the batter before baking

Keep eggs at room temperature for greater volume in meringues.

Step away from the that banana nut bread! Most quick breads, especially those with nuts, taste better the next day.



Add a little vinegar or lemon juice to potatoes to keep them whiter when mashed

If your rice is sticky, rinse it with warm water. Or cook it with a few drops of lemon juice to keep the grains from sticking

Get the garlic or onion smell off your hands by rinsing them under cold water while rubbing a stainless steel spoon



Keep cheese from sticking to the grater by spraying the grater with a little cooking spray first.

To cut down on odors associated with cooking cabbage or cauliflower, add a little vinegar to the water and don't overcook.



To add flavor to tea, dissolve old fashioned lemon drops or peppermint hard candies in tea. They melt quickly in hot liquid and keep tea tasting brisk.



Three large stalks of celery, chopped and added to about 2 cups of pinto beans makes the dish easier to digest.

Cake icing will stay put if you sprinkle the cake with powdered sugar first.



No buttermilk on hand? Make a substitute by adding 2 Tbs. of lemon juice to a 1 Cup measuring cup then fill the rest of the way with milk.



## Angel Biscuits

1 package dry yeast  
4 Tbsp. water, warm  
1/3 cup sugar, divided  
5 cups all purpose flour  
3 tsp. baking powder

1 tsp. baking soda  
1 tsp. salt  
1 cup solid vegetable shortening  
1 3/4 cups buttermilk (warm)



Dissolve yeast in warm water with 2 Tbsp. of the sugar. Set aside while mixing remaining sugar, flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt in the large bowl of a food processor. Add shortening, cut into pieces, and pulse on and off, scraping as needed, to incorporate. (Without a food processor, cut shortening into the dry ingredients with a pastry blender, two knives or your fingers until mixture is in fine particles.) Add buttermilk and dissolved yeast and mix until mixture resembles yeast dough. Make biscuits or place dough in a covered bowl in refrigerator and use as needed.

To make biscuits: Roll out portions of dough on lightly floured surface until 1/2-inch thick. Cut with 2-inch biscuit cutter or the rim of a glass. Place biscuits on a greased cookie sheet. Brush tops with melted butter. Cover with a clean kitchen towel and let rise in a warm place for an hour. (Some cooks skip the rising step and bake the biscuits immediately.) Bake at 425 degrees 10-15 minutes or until brown.  
Makes about 2 1/2-3 dozen biscuits.

## Honey Chicken

4 chicken breasts, boneless  
4 ounces butter, melted  
4 ounces honey

1 cup Italian bread crumbs  
4 slices provolone cheese



Mix the melted butter and honey until smooth. Dip the chicken breasts in the mixture. Then dredge in bread crumbs. Bake on a lightly greased baking sheet at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. The internal temperature of the chicken should reach 165 degrees. When cooked, turn off oven. Lay slices of cheese on each chicken breast and return to the oven until melted. Serve with sautéed seasonal vegetables and/or pasta.

## Yogurt Brownies (contains no cholesterol)

1 package family size brownie mix  
2 egg whites

1/3 cup Low-Fat Vanilla Yogurt  
Confectioner's sugar



Preheat oven to 350. Grease bottom of 13X9X2 in. pan. Combine brownie mix, egg whites and yogurt in large bowl. Stir with spoon until well blended, about 50 strokes (batter will be thick). Spread in pan and bake for 22-24 minutes. Let cool completely and cut into bars. Dust with confectioner's sugar as desired.

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