



For Immediate Release - March 16, 2007

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Asuris Northwest Health Offers Tips for a Healthy and Green St. Patrick's Day

(Spokane) – We all know the importance of making healthy choices each day, but holidays such as St. Patrick's Day tend to send most of us off our healthy track with an overindulgence in high-calorie foods and drinks, such as corned beef and cabbage, soda bread and green beer.

At Asuris, we are committed to helping our members and the community take charge of their health year-round. Below are some fun, quick tips for staying healthy this St. Patrick's Day, for consideration in stories you may be developing on this topic.

Green to Go

Green may look good on you, but it's also good for you. When you dash to the grocery store, pick up some green food to go. Grab some pre-washed, prepared green vegetables for a healthy snack. Green vegetables are full of antioxidants like beta carotene and vitamin A, C, and E. Some of our employees' favorites include sugar snap peas, celery, bell peppers, cucumbers and broccoli. There are also many delicious non-fat dressings on the market that really add flavor and zip with minimal calories.

And while you're at it, add some leafy greens to your cart – they're packed with vitamins and minerals like folic acid, potassium and iron. Leafy greens contain Omega 3 fatty acids which are essential to a healthy diet and can help increase HDL (good) cholesterol. Dark green leafy vegetables are a great source of calcium, which can help fight osteoporosis and may help prevent hypertension.

Looking for an easy dish to bring to the Sunday potluck? Grab a bunch of those green veggies for the snack tray and pick up a few six-packs of green tea soda. Instead of regular chips and dip, bring healthy alternatives like baked chips, and whip up a batch of guacamole (made with heart-healthy avocados). Here's a simple recipe from one of our own employees:

Ingredients:

4 avocados
½ teaspoon of lemon or lime juice
1 tablespoon low-fat mayonnaise
1/3 cup pre-made chunky salsa

Mix ingredients together and refrigerate. Serve with low-fat, blue or baked chips (found at area grocery stores). Serves 6 – 8 people.

Recipe courtesy of Carol Brandt.

How to Burn a Beer

If you are going to enjoy a pint, remember that alcohol adds calories too. A holiday celebration brings plenty of opportunity to blow your healthy diet with food and drink; you'll need to work off the calories with some morning-after exercise.

Before you reach for that extra helping of corned beef or the Guinness to wash it down with, do the math. More than half the calories in corned beef are fat calories – even when the fat is trimmed. The average 12-oz. can of beer has over 100 calories. Drinking one can of beer is equivalent to eating a chocolate chip cookie. Drinking four is equal to eating a Big Mac hamburger. Here are some good ways to make up the difference:

Activity (one hour)	Calories burned	
	140-150 pound person	170-180-pound person
Bicycling	448-476	539-574
Jogging, 5 mph	512-544	616-656
Running, 8 mph	864-918	1,040-1,107
Stair climbing	576-612	693-738
Walking, 3.5 mph	243-258	293-312

Source: MayoClinic.com

About Asuris Northwest Health

Based in Spokane, Asuris Northwest Health offers a full range of health care coverage options, including dental and vision coverage, for Eastern Washington employers and individuals. Asuris also offers Medicare supplemental plans and Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage, and provides member access to more than 19,000 health care providers. For more information, visit the company's Web site at www.asuris.com. Asuris Northwest Health, a not-for-profit health plan, is a subsidiary of Regence BlueShield, a leading health plan in Washington.