Focus on Fruits
This month your children have learned about the importance of eating fruit. It is recommended that children consume a variety of fruits, focusing on fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruits. You should make sure that your children are consuming fruit juices in moderation because juices have more natural sugar and less fiber than whole fruits. Most fruits are naturally low in fat, sodium and calories and have no cholesterol. Fruits are important sources of nutrients including potassium, dietary fiber, vitamin C, and folic acid.

Recommended Servings
Boys and girls, ages 9-13 who get less than 30 minutes per day of moderate physical activity generally need 1 ½ cups of fruit daily. Those who are more active may be able to consume more while staying within their calorie needs.

Health Benefits
Eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables as part of an overall healthy diet may:
- Reduce the risk for stroke and other cardiovascular diseases.
- Reduce risk for type 2 diabetes.
- Protect against certain cancers.
- Decrease bone loss.
- Help with weight loss and maintenance.

Nutrients in Fruits
Fruits are important sources of many nutrients, including potassium, dietary fiber, vitamin C, and folic acid (folate).
- Potassium may help to maintain healthy blood pressure. Fruit sources of potassium include bananas, prunes and prune juice, honeydew melon, and orange juice.
- Fruits contain dietary fiber, which may help reduce blood cholesterol levels, constipation, and diverticulosis. Fiber also helps to provide a feeling of fullness with fewer calories.
- Fruit also contains vitamin C, which is important for growth and repair of all body tissues. Vitamin C also helps heal cuts and wounds and keeps teeth and gums healthy.
- Fruits have folic acid, which helps the body form red blood cells.

Tips for Eating More Fruit
- Keep a bowl of fruit on the table, counter, or in the refrigerator.
- Buy fresh fruits in season when they may be less expensive and at their peak flavor.
- Buy fruits that are dried, frozen or canned so that you always have a supply on hand.
• Consider buying pre-cut fruits to refrigerate if you are short on time.

At meals:
• At breakfast, top your cold or hot cereal with fruit or try mixing fruit with low-fat or fat free yogurt.
• At lunch, pack fresh fruit or choose individual containers of fruits like peaches or applesauce.
• At dinner, try adding fresh fruit to tossed salads.
• Add fruit like pineapple or peaches, to kabobs as part of a barbeque meal.
• For dessert, have baked apples, pears, or a fruit salad.

As snacks:
• Try cut-up fruit or bite size fruits, such as berries or grapes.
• Dried fruits are good for snacks because that are easy to carry and store well. Remember, ¼ cup dried equals ½ cup of fresh fruit.
• Try spreading peanut butter on apple slices or top frozen yogurt with berries or slices of kiwi fruit.

Making fruits more appealing:
• Try low-fat yogurt or pudding as a dip for fruits like strawberries or melons.
• Make a fruit smoothie by blending fat-free or low-fat milk or yogurt with fresh or frozen fruit. Try bananas, peaches, strawberries, or other berries.
• For fresh fruit salads, mix apples, bananas, or pears with acidic fruits like oranges, pineapple, or lemon juice to keep them from turning brown.

Fruit tips for kids:
• Set a good example for children by eating fruit everyday with meals or as snacks.
• Offer children a choice of fruits for lunch.
• Depending on their age, children can help shop for, clean, peel, or cut up fruits.
• Decorate plates or serving dishes with fruit slices.
• Choose fruit options, such as sliced apples, mixed fruit cup, or 100% fruit juice instead of higher calorie options that are available in some fast food restaurants.

Fruit Safety
Make sure that you and your children wash fruits before preparing or eating them. Under clean, running water, rub fruits briskly with your hands to remove dirt and surface microorganisms. Make sure to dry fruits after you wash them. Keep fruits separate from raw meat, poultry, and seafood at all times.

Source: (www.mypyramid.gov)