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Greet the Year of the Golden Rat with the Colors of Health

San Francisco, CA— Chinatown Public Health Center wishes everyone good health and a happy New Year. Albert Yu, MD, Center Director, encourages everyone to adopt “The 5 colors of Fruits and Vegetables a Day Plan”--- to begin the New Year with a healthful start.

“Eat more fruits and vegetables from 5 different colors everyday,” is a message promoted by the Cancer Prevention & Nutrition Section of California Department of Health. Nutrition Manager Catherine Wong, R.D. offers some unique nutritious Chinese New Year greetings. Each greeting introduces a particular fruit and vegetable color group and the associated health benefits.

“*Ji Suen Mien Dong*”

“*ji*”: children, puns with purple in Cantonese; “*suen*”: grandchildren; “*mien-mien*”: uninterrupted. This phrase means a continuation of offspring.

Blue/Purple fruits and vegetables such as eggplant, black grapes, plums, figs, and raisins, contain anthocyanins and phenolics; may reduce cancer risks, and help to maintain urinary tract health, and memory function.

“*Fuk Luk Sau Chuen*”

“*fuk*”: beatitude; “*luk*”: prosperity, fame, material blessings, puns with green; “*sau*”: longevity. **This phrase indicates total presence of beatitude, prosperity and longevity.**

Green fruits and vegetables such as bok choy, yau choy, spinach, broccoli, chayote squash, green peppers, honeydew melon, kiwi, green apples contain phytochemicals such as lutein and indoles and other vitamins and minerals, which may lower cancer risks, help to maintain vision, strong bones and teeth.

“*Bak Si Hun Tone*”

“*bak*”: hundreds, puns with white; “*si*”: matters, aspects; “*hun-tone*”: smooth, with no hindrance. This phrase implies smooth sailing in all directions.

White fruits and vegetables such as cauliflower, jicama, kohlrabi, mushrooms, white turnips, garlic, ginger, onion, banana, white peach, white nectarines contain phytochemicals such as allicin, found in the garlic and onion family. This group may reduce the risks of heart problems and cancer, help maintain a healthy level of blood cholesterol, and help control high blood pressure.

“Gum Un Moon Oak”

“gum”: gold, or yellow; “un”: silver, often used with “gum” to indicate wealth; “moon”: full; “oak” house. “Gum Un Moon Oak” means a house full with gold and silver.

Yellow fruits and vegetables such as carrots, yellow peppers, pumpkin, yellow corn, yellow tomato, yellow potato, yellow apple, apricot, cantaloupe, grapefruit, and lemon, mango, orange, papaya, persimmon, pineapple, and yellow flesh watermelon. This group contains antioxidants, vitamin C, carotenoids, and bioflavonoids, and may reduce the risks of cancer, increase heart health, vision and the immunity system.

“Hung Won Dong-Tau”

“hung”: good and plenty, puns with red; “won”: fortune, luck, destiny; “dong-tau”: overhead, descend upon. Hung Won Dong-Tau means a downpour of good fortune.

Red fruits and vegetables such as tomato, red pepper, red onions, red potato, radicchio, red apple, cherries, red grapes, pomegranate, strawberries, and watermelon. This group contains phytochemicals such as lycopene and anthocyanins, and may maintain heart health, help with memory, maintain urinary function and reduce cancer risks.

Recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables for the individual depend on age, gender, and activity level. The Food Pyramid recommends the following daily amounts for those that are sedentary. Those who are more physically active may require more.

- ♥ 2 ½ - 3 cups of vegetables and 2 cups of fruits for men
- ♥ 2-2 1/2 cups of vegetables and 1 ½ - 2 cups of fruits for women
- ♥ 3 cups of vegetables and 1 ½ - 2 cups of fruits for children 9 to 18 years of age.

Ms. Wong further suggests incorporating more vegetables and fruits in preparing Lunar New Year foods to add color, texture and nutrition. One common dish, Loh Hon Jai (a vegetarian dish named after the 18 disciples of Buddha), includes 5 different colors of vegetables such as purple cabbage, snow peas, jicama, carrots, and red pepper.

“Besides healthy eating, an active lifestyle—including 30-60 minutes of physical activity everyday—will help to reduce the risk of many diseases such as cancers, heart disease, stroke, obesity and diabetes,” Dr. Yu advises.

Chinatown Public Health Center has Healthy Eating brochures and Lunar New Year recipes with healthful tips for the public. Please send a stamped, self addressed envelope to: Nutrition Services, Chinatown Public Health Center, 1490 Mason St., San Francisco, CA 94133.

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