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The March to a Better You...

March is a wonderful time of rebirth. The first signs of spring are on the horizon and the crocuses will soon be sprouting their blooms. March Madness is just a few weeks away and the excitement of who's going to make the Final Four will keep many of us on the edge of our seat. And, what would March be without the color green? Green signifies St. Patrick's Day, stewardship of the earth, and the many fruits and vegetables starting to come into season. But the most exciting aspect of March is that it is National Nutrition Month.

National Nutrition Month is a great way to celebrate good eating habits and becoming more physically active. If you want to lead a healthier lifestyle, consider making an appointment with a registered dietitian (RD) this month. Registered dietitians are experts in food and nutrition and we can provide advice on smart eating and healthy living. Many dietitians work in clinical settings, such as hospitals, nursing homes or other healthcare facilities. We educate patients about nutrition and provide medical nutrition therapy for conditions like heart disease and diabetes. We also manage foodservice operations in these settings, as well as in schools, day-care centers and correctional facilities; overseeing everything from food purchasing and preparation to managing staff.

RDs also work in places that specialize in sports nutrition and wellness programs, educating clients about the connection between food, fitness, and health. Food and nutrition-related business and industries offer another area of employment. In the corporate world, RDs work in communications, consumer affairs, public relations, marketing, and product development. Many dietitians work in private practice, under contract with healthcare or food companies, or in their own business. RDs may provide services to chefs or restaurant managers, food vendors and distributors, athletes, nursing home residents, or company employees. Community and public health settings such as the Women, Infants

and Children's (WIC) program, the Extension Service, or public health departments also make up a large area of practice for dietitians. In this setting, RDs teach and advise the public on ways to improve their quality of life through healthy eating habits.

Some dietitians work in universities and medical centers, where they teach other health care professionals about the science of food and nutrition. Still others work in research for food and pharmaceutical companies, or in universities and hospitals where they conduct experiments to answer critical nutrition questions and find alternative foods or nutrition recommendations for the public. Dietitians are skilled not only in disease treatment, but also in health promotion. We are an integral part of the health care team and can almost always help with what ails you.

They say beware the Ides of March. During this National Nutrition Month, the West Virginia Dietetic Association reminds you to beware of the expanding waistline and diet-related disease. If you find that what's on your plate really isn't all that great, march to make an appointment with a registered dietitian. We'll help you get back on track to eating smart and living healthfully.

For more information, contact a registered dietitian at www.eatrightwv.org.