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Americans Urged to Give Family Meals an “Upgrade”

*New Meal Upgrade Calculator Shows Consumers How to “Upgrade” Favorite Dishes;
Backed by Research Showing Significant Savings in Calories and Fat*

New York – April 14, 2010 – At a time when a third of America’s youth is overweight or obese, two organizations are taking steps to show consumers, and especially busy moms, how to “upgrade” favorite meals so families can reap the benefits of consuming less fat and calories.

At a news briefing in New York, Shape Up America! and National Turkey Federation (NTF) today launched *Simple Steps to Upgrade Your Diet*, a public education campaign about making small changes in meal preparation to improve the family diet. Developed in response to First Lady Michelle Obama’s *Let’s Move* initiative to fight childhood obesity, the campaign features the *Meal Upgrade Calculator*, an online tool that shows consumers how to “upgrade” favorite family meals by changing the type of meat and poultry, the side dishes and even the condiments to decrease the amount of fat and calories in breakfast, lunch and dinner menus.

Based on new research from Shape Up America!, the savings from using the calculator are significant and demonstrate that small changes in meal preparation can pay off in meaningful health improvements. For example, using the calculator just to change the meat to turkey in a family meal nets an average savings of 108 calories per eating occasion. Put into perspective, two studies published in the July/August 2009 *American Journal of Health Promotion* estimate that a permanent 100 calorie a day reduction would eliminate approximately 71.2 million cases of overweight/obesity and save \$58 billion annually in medical expenses to yield an estimated boost in economic productivity of more than \$100 billion annually.

“The message from the First Lady and all leading public health officials is that all of us have a role to play in preventing childhood obesity, starting in our own homes. And that is the reason for this new campaign – to give consumers the tools to make simple ‘upgrades’ in meal preparation that will reduce the calories and fat in the family diet,” said Barbara J. Moore, Ph.D., Shape Up America! president and CEO.

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Menu Upgrade Calculator Shows How to Make Simple Changes in Ingredients

Because consumers lack the tools to put dietary recommendations into practice, Shape Up America! and NTF developed the *Meal Upgrade Calculator* to help Americans make smarter choices when preparing family meals. Featuring breakfast, lunch and dinner options, the calculator allows consumers to choose a number of possible “upgrades,” starting by changing the meat to turkey, which is nutrient-rich, low in fat and calories and is considered an excellent protein source.

“The calculator brings to life what we in the nutrition community have always known – that turkey is a positive and simple step consumers can take to lower the fat and calories in their diet while not making tradeoffs in taste and convenience,” said Hilary Thesmar, Ph.D., RD, NTF senior director of scientific and regulatory affairs. “Not only is turkey highly nutritious but the variety of turkey cuts and products available today can be incorporated into any meal, which means cooking delicious, convenient and healthy meals is easier than ever.”

Other possible “upgrades” include altering the side dishes, switching to higher fiber breads and changing the condiments. Around each “upgrade,” the calculator shows what these simple changes are worth in calories, fat and saturated fat saved.

Currently, the *Meal Upgrade Calculator* features 24 meals that are commonplace in the American diet – from scrambled eggs and bacon and hot dogs to spaghetti and meatballs, and pizza. On an ongoing basis, Shape Up America! and NTF plan to add new meals to the calculator along with recipes and cooking tips. The calculator will also be promoted widely to nutrition educators and health professionals with the goal of using this new tool to counsel families about healthier eating.

New Research Demonstrates Potential Health Savings

The campaign is the outgrowth of new research documenting how much an individual can save over a year in reduced calories, fat, saturated fat and cholesterol by making one simple change in the diet once a week – in this case, substituting turkey for higher fat meat and poultry products in 22 breakfast, lunch and dinner menus. Conducted by Shape Up America!, the assessment found an average savings of 108 calories per meal occasion, an important benchmark for documenting what this one dietary change could mean in reducing overweight and obesity.

Calculating the impact over the course of a year, the Shape Up America! research estimated a savings of 6,408 calories a year or almost 2 pounds (1.8 pounds) in excess weight if Americans substitute lean turkey for another meat protein one time a week at alternating meal occasions (i.e., breakfast or lunch or dinner). This change also netted an average reduction in the total fat, saturated fat and cholesterol consumed by 59 percent, 71 percent and 28 percent, respectively.

Shape Up America! also estimated the potential health savings in those situations when families consumed the same lower-fat turkey version of a meat-based meal every week. Using lasagna as the example, the researchers obtained a savings per meal occasion of 239 calories and an annual savings of 12,428 calories or 3.6 pounds a year. In addition, Shape Up America! calculated an average reduction in the total fat, saturated fat and cholesterol consumed by 66 percent, 73 percent and 22 percent, respectively.

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The *Simple Steps to Upgrade Your Diet* comes at a time when First Lady Michelle Obama, the current and all living former U.S. Surgeons General and many other health leaders have joined with virtually every major medical society and public health organization in urging Americans to make small decreases in food and beverage calories and to keep total fat intake to between 20 percent and 35 percent of calories. While no single approach will achieve these objectives, the *Meal Upgrade Calculator* is an easy-to-use tool that will help Americans appreciate the cumulative benefits of small dietary changes and see how easy it is to put these recommendations into practice.

The *Meal Upgrade Calculator* is available on the Web sites of both organizations at www.shapeup.org and www.EatTurkey.com.

About Shape Up America!

Shape Up America! was founded in 1994 by former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop to raise awareness of the health effects of obesity and to educate the public, health professionals and policymakers on proven ways to achieve and maintain a healthy weight. The organization maintains an award-winning Web site – www.shapeup.org – accessed by more than 100,000 visitors each month.

About the National Turkey Federation

Headquartered in Washington, the National Turkey Federation (NTF) is the leading information source for the \$14 billion turkey industry and its wholesome, high-quality, nutritious products. Through its comprehensive Web site – www.EatTurkey.com – NTF provides consumers, food professionals and the media an extensive library of information including healthy eating and restaurant trends, turkey cuts and purchasing tips, turkey nutrition, cooking techniques, and turkey facts and trivia. Additionally, the site presents a searchable database of more than 1,800 recipes, offers a recipe E-mail program and provides special seasonal and holiday ideas.

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