

# Opinion & Perspectives

## Healthification simplifies healthy choices

### Submitted Story



Courtesy Photo

Nutritional value ratings can yield surprising results, such as a bowl of Cheerios has a higher nutritional value than some Kashi; and frozen green beans, canned no-salt green beans and fresh green beans have the same score of 100.

Health care professionals are experts when it comes to healing the human body, yet they often neglect to practice the very mantra they preach.

The staggering reality is that three of the four states where Mercy serves rank in the top nine nationwide for highest adult obesity rates. According to the most recent report by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Arkansas, Missouri and Oklahoma have a prevalence of obesity equal to or greater than 30 percent and Kansas only betters that at 28 percent.

So, with that in mind, Mercy is promoting stronger, healthier lifestyles by its more than 36,000 co-workers through an initiative known as "Healthification." The plan supports a well-balanced life, which includes nutrition, physical activity, emotional and spiritual well-being, and smoking cessation. As a first step, Mercy is partnering with NuVal, a nutritional scoring

system, to help co-workers and customers make informed decisions.

Mercy co-workers, patients and families will be

able to utilize the NuVal scoring system to determine the nutritional value of food purchased in cafeterias throughout Mercy.

"Working in a hospital, we see people every day who are very unhealthy," said Chuck Trudo, night nursing supervisor for Mer-

cy Medical Center, Rogers, Ark. "About a year ago, I realized I was headed down the same path. I was falling into some poor lifestyle habits and gaining weight. I've made some changes since, and Mercy is making it easier for me to stay on track."

NuVal was developed by an independent team of nutrition and medical experts affiliated with Yale University School of Medicine. The team worked for two years and put in place a patent-pending algorithm which converts complex nutritional information into a single, easy-to-use score.

More than 30 different nutrients and nutrition factors go into the score. The nutritional value of a food is ranked on a scale from 1 to 100: the higher the score, the more nutritious. In some cases, the findings can be surprising: a bowl of Cheerios has a higher nutritional value than some Kashi; and frozen green beans, canned no-salt green beans and fresh green beans have the same score of 100.

"Healthification is the mindful pursuit of well-being and Mercy is about making it easier for our co-workers and the people we serve every day to make these good decisions," said Lance Luria, MD, Mercy's health and wellness vice president and medical director. "What we know is that by making simple choices, we can dramatically affect our overall health. If we want to optimize the value and joy we get out of life, we must eat for life, move for life, breathe for life, and be emotionally and spiritually balanced for life, as our health and wellness truly depends on it."

*Mercy - Sisters of Mercy Health System - is the eighth largest Catholic health care system in the U.S. and serves more than 2.7 million people annually. Mercy includes 28 hospitals, more than 200 outpatient facilities, 36,000 co-workers and 1,300 integrated physicians in Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma.*

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