

Keeping your body healthy is an expression of gratitude to the whole cosmos - the trees, the clouds, everything ~ Thich Nhat Hanh



Weighty Matters

Parents teach their children to cover their noses and mouths when they cough or sneeze, and remind them to wash their hands often to avoid colds, flu and other diseases. For all their care, there's an epidemic parents may have overlooked - one that cannot be avoided by good hygiene - childhood obesity. Since 1999, the numbers of overweight children and adolescents have tripled. Recognizing that overweight is a public health problem, the Surgeon General issued a Call to Action

(www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/obesity/calltoaction/fact_adolescents.htm) to focus attention on this issue for children and adolescents. As follow up, the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services launched a Childhood Overweight and Obesity Prevention Initiative in November 2007 (www.hhs.gov/news/press/2007pres/11/pr20071127a.html).

Even before the government weighed in, Eleanor Randolph, a member of the editorial board for the New York Times (NYT), proposed 10 action steps to encourage healthier lifestyles for children and adolescents. To those steps we've added updated resources and information. The original article appeared in the NYT May 10, 2006.

Stop Bombarding Children with Junk Food Ads -

Commonsense Media reports that children see at least one food ad every 5 minutes during Saturday morning cartoons. In a single year, 80% of commercials are for fast food, candy, cereal and toys. Children are enticed to try certain food products because they come with free prizes or a favorite cartoon character on the box. Some commercials imply family time can be more fun if everyone eats a certain food, which is often fast food, candy, soft drinks or cereals that are high in calories and have little nutrition. You can read about Guidelines for Responsible Food Marketing to Children at

<http://cspinet.org/marketingguidelines.pdf> and talk to your children about the tricks advertisers use to market junk food.



Promote Healthy Eating - Governor Mike Huckabee of Arkansas and former president Bill Clinton adopted healthier lifestyles after having health problems due to their weight and eating habits. Governor Huckabee developed Type 2 diabetes. President Clinton, who loved to eat fast food, needed heart bypass surgery. Both talk publicly about their experiences and now eat healthier and exercise. It's great when public figures bring much-needed attention to the importance of eating healthy. Still, parents are the single, biggest influence on their children. Visit www.shapeup.org/fittips/letter.php for information about setting goals for healthy eating, exercises that fit into your family's weekly routine and for tips (English en Español) to get your family on track.



Ban Junk Food In Schools - See if your school has a policy about the types of foods sold in vending machines, and if there are limits on the sugar and fat content. The Center for Science in the Public Interest offers a free School Foods Toolkit with ideas for improving school foods, model school policies and more at www.cspinet.org/schoolfoodkit/index.html.

Serve Healthier School Snacks - Rather than telling students what they should not snack on, provide foods they should eat. Iowa Senator Tom Harkin started a pilot program for 100 schools in the mid-west to receive fresh fruit and vegetable snacks for their students.



Tax the Fatteners - Cigarettes and alcohol are taxed to offset the costs of the health problems they can cause. Why not tax junk food? The money could help pay for exercise programs, or help offset the medical costs associated with Type 2 diabetes.

Stop Underwriting the Cost of Junk Food - Farmers receive subsidies for corn and some other crops. As a result, they grow increasing amounts of corn, which is used for high-fructose corn syrup. The increased use of corn syrup as a sweetener in many food products is proportional to the increase in Type 2 diabetes. For naturally sweet snack ideas, visit www.cspinet.org/smartmouth/articles/fandv.html.

Make Healthy Food more Affordable - Junk food is cheaper than fresh fruits & vegetables. Active Living Leadership, a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation program, created a guide (www.activelivingleadership.org/uploads/PDFs/healthyfoodprimer2007.pdf) for policy-makers about improving access to healthy foods, and includes ways schools & communities can help.

Label Food in Chain Restaurants - Many chain restaurants are starting to provide nutritional and serving size information so customers can make informed decisions about what & how much to eat. Do your homework before you go out. Check out exactly what a fast food meal will cost - in calories! See www.diabetesnet.com/diabetes_food_diet/fast_foods.php.

Parents & Schools Work Together - Schools can share educational materials about helping children maintain healthy weights so parents can support what their children are learning in school and be more knowledgeable about helping their children eat right at home.

Exercise for Everybody - Eating healthy is only half the recipe for maintaining a healthy weight. Children need to be active everyday. See the Family Resource Corner for ideas.



Share Your Views with Us!

This issue of **Bright Futures: Family Matters** includes a questionnaire. Your input will help us make this publication be as useful as possible to you and your extended networks. Please take a few minutes to fill it out online at www.brightfuturesforfamilies.org/feedback.htm, or fax the attached evaluation form to (617) 399-8325, or mail.

Partners...



The National Initiative for Children's Healthcare Quality (NICHQ) works with staff and partners throughout the country to improve the quality of healthcare for children. Their agenda includes prevention of childhood obesity, promoting evidence-based, family-centered care of children with special health needs, promoting patient safety, as well as quality care and outcomes for all children. NICHQ collects resources, identifies promising practices and shares ideas that work to improve health care in doctors' offices and other community settings, in hospitals and at state and national levels. Visit the website for information about their upcoming forum, to read about their quality improvement initiatives, and to access resources and materials to learn more about these important issues that affect children's health. The site includes many tools you can use to help promote a healthy lifestyle for your children.

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Family Resource Corner

Teach your child to be media-savvy. Visit www.pbs.org/parents/childrenandmedia/ for excellent ideas about discussing and discovering the messages behind the marketing gimmicks with children of all ages.

What's your junk food IQ? Your kids and you will enjoy the quiz at www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/junkfoodquiz.html.

Teens don't always listen to their parents, but they will listen to each other. Encourage your adolescent to learn more about his or her food choices, how fast foods stack up, and to use the 'tell-a-friend' feature of the teen-oriented website at www.smartmouth.org.

Find delicious, make-ahead suggestions for healthy snacks at www.kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition_fit/nutrition/afterschool_snacks.html

Is your teen concerned about her weight and unsure about her nutrition needs? Read trends in teen nutrition at www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content3/ific/ific.teen.trends.html.

Does your child need incentives to get moving? Encourage him to create an activity calendar to chart his progress. Visit www.bam.gov/sub_physicalactivity/physicalactivity_activitycalendar.html.

www.girlpower.gov/girlarea/bodywise/disability/body/active.htm lists ways for girls with disabilities/chronic illnesses to stay active.

www.bam.gov/sub_physicalactivity/physicalactivity_meetchallenge.html includes profiles of athletes with disabilities and ideas for staying active when a child has a physical limitation.

What's New in Research?

The November 2007 research report, **To Read or Not to Read, A Question of National Consequence**, from the National Endowment for the Arts, examines youth reading habits, the decline in reading, its affect on literacy, and the upshot of this alarming trend. The good news is data from 1984 - 2004 show more than 50% of young children read for fun almost every day. Unfortunately, by age 13, and again at age 17, there is a significant decline in reading for pleasure, and these percentages have decreased since 1984. So, not only do teens read less than young children, they are also reading less than teens did 20 years ago. Additionally, 35% of students in grades 7 - 12 who read report they use other media, like watching TV, listening to music, or e-mailing while reading.*



It's not surprising that better reading skills are linked to academic success and better jobs. What is surprising is that data suggests reading is beneficial regardless of socio-economic status and can "transform lives." Individuals who read are more likely to exercise, and as adults take on more social and civic responsibilities, an integral part of building healthy communities. Read the entire report at www.nea.gov/research/ToRead.pdf.

*In a separate study, researchers at UCLA found research subjects had difficulty recalling information when they engaged in multitasking activities (www.magazine.ucla.edu/depts/quicktakes/multitasking/).

Mark Your Calendar For...

National Eating Disorders Awareness Week is February 24 - March 1, 2008



Eating disorders are not just an issue of a person being too thin. They are serious, often life-threatening illnesses. To raise awareness about eating disorders, and lessen the associated stigma, the National Association of Eating Disorders promotes understanding of body types and healthy weights with this year's theme, **"Be comfortable in your genes. Wear jeans that fit the TRUE you."** Visit the website at www.myneda.org for more information about this event. The website has excellent support materials (English **en Español**) specifically designed for girls and women, boys and men, and that address the cultural factors of eating disorders. There is a survival guide, resources for working with health insurers and more. Need to talk to someone who understands? The Information & Referral Hotline (800) 931-2237 is staffed from 8:30am - 4:30pm Pacific Time.

Family Voices is a national grassroots network of families and friends speaking on behalf of children with special health needs. Our children are also part of the wider world of children. With an Improving Understanding of MCH grant, Family Voices works to encourage partnerships between families and professionals for children's good health. **Bright Futures: Family Matters** is a publication to share with your networks. Check out our Family Voices web sites at www.brightfuturesforfamilies.org and www.familyvoices.org.

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1. Are you completing this questionnaire from a: (check one)

- Family member/parent perspective Professional perspective

2. Please indicate the overall value of this newsletter:

- Not Valuable Very Valuable
 1 2 3 4 5

3. How often do you forward or distribute this newsletter? (check one)

- Never Sometimes Regularly

4. If you forward or distribute this newsletter, approximately how many people are included in this distribution?

5. Do you forward or distribute this newsletter to (check all that apply):

- Families / Family Organizations? Professionals / Professional Organizations? N/A

6. Please indicate the maternal and child health topics in which you are interested: (check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Child Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Oral Health |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Information and Support | <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy Sexuality | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Relationships and Resources |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy Eating | <input type="checkbox"/> Children's Health Care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Activity | <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy Weight |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Safety and Injury Prevention | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ | |

7. Please indicate the ages/groups in which you are interested: (check all that apply)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Infants | <input type="checkbox"/> Children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children | <input type="checkbox"/> Families |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teens/youth | |

8. Please rate Bright Futures Family Matters on:

- | | | | |
|---------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Too Low | Just Right | Too High |
| Reading Level | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

9. Please rate Bright Futures Family Matters on:

- | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Poor | Fair | Average | Good | Great |
| Attractiveness and Formatting | <input type="checkbox"/> |

10. Please tell us what you think of any of the following newsletter features – Main Article, Partner Highlight, Family Resource Corner, What's New in Research, en Espanol Highlights.

A. What's **most** useful/interesting/valuable? _____

B. What's **less** useful/interesting/valuable? _____

11. Do you have suggestions to improve Bright Futures Family Matters? _____ (over)

12. Any other comments you'd like to provide? _____ (over)

Thank you for taking the time to provide us feedback.