Healthy Eating Habits

Childhood is the time to instill lifelong eating and exercise habits that contribute to good health. Nutrition affects children’s ability to learn, develop and stay healthy throughout life.

Obesity is one of the most significant health problems facing Americans today. The number of seriously overweight children and adolescents has more than doubled in the last three decades. It is estimated that almost 30 percent of children and teens are overweight. An overweight adolescent has a 70 percent chance of becoming an obese adult. Obesity also puts children at a higher risk for life threatening health problems such as high blood pressure, premature heart attacks and diabetes. Obesity in childhood often leads to a lifetime of poor eating habits and low self-esteem.

Common Misconceptions

Eat everything on your plate
Forcing kids to always finish everything on their plate is not a productive way to encourage healthy eating. In fact, it prohibits children from listening to their inner hunger cues and fails to allow the appetite to control the quantity of food eaten. Children then overeat to please parents, avoid punishment, or get away from the table.

No sweets policy
Children will get their hands on sweets; denying access to them at all times will only make your kids more obsessive about eating them. Instead, allow your child to choose one sweet food item each time you shop. This will lessen the appeal.

Sugar makes kids hyper
Contrary to popular belief, sugar does not cause hyperactivity, but it can contribute to excess weight gain and tooth decay. Foods that are high in sugar tend to also be high in calories and fat, but low in valuable nutrients. If you notice significant changes in your child’s mood or behavior after consuming sugary foods it may be related to food additives, allergies or caffeine. Check with your doctor.
Meal-Planning Basics

✓ Sharing meals together is an important part of family life. It provides some structure to a busy day and gives families an opportunity to listen and support each other everyday.

✓ Be a good role model. Children reflect parents’ actions and attitudes toward most things, including food. It is important to try new foods and new ways for preparing them. Involve your children in food preparation.

✓ Buy a variety of healthy foods, including fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain breads and cereals.

✓ Set specific times for meals and snacks.

✓ Limit sugary-high fat snacks.

✓ Encourage children to drink plenty of water or milk, not empty-calorie fruit drinks and sodas.

✓ Avoid adding excessive salt to foods.

✓ Be a planner. Most young children need a snack or two in addition to regular meals. Plan snacks so your child eats every two to three hours. Use the Food Guide Pyramid for meals and snacks.

✓ Be adventurous. Have a “new food night” each week. Include your child in choosing the new food to try.

✓ Be creative. Try shredding fruits and vegetables and adding them to pancakes, muffins or hamburger. Encourage your child to invent new snacks or sandwiches from healthful ingredients. Use color, texture, size and variety when thinking up new food ideas.

Help your children understand why some foods are better than others. For example, junk foods have little nutritional value but are usually high in calories, fat, sodium, sugar, and preservatives. Junk food fills you up so that you don’t feel like eating more nutritionally balanced meals.

Peer pressure often compels children to make poor food choices. Help children understand the importance of proper nutrition by focusing on rewards that are important to them. When kids give their bodies the proper fuel, they are able to think more clearly, perform better in school, athletics, and control acne.

The Facts
From the day of their birth, children imitate their parents. A child’s first and most important teachers are the parents. Parents are the most significant people in their child’s life. Most parents want to help better their children’s life skills, learning abilities and knowledge. New parents put a lot of time and energy into their baby’s care and nurturing. However, as children mature and develop their independence, they begin looking to other sources to expand their education/learning. When this change occurs, it does not mean a parent should
put forth less effort into their child’s education. Rather, parents need to alter the way they help their child learn and continue to actively participate in their child’s formal education and school activities.

Ways to Participate
Parental involvement is vital for children to become successful in their education. Parental participation involves two key components: encouragement and support for their child’s learning; and becoming actively involved with the learning activities and environment. Parents can demonstrate their active and supportive roles in many ways. Parents can participate in their child’s learning through: parenting; communicating; volunteering; teaching/learning at home; creating an educational environment at home; mutual decision making; and working in partnership with the community. Here are a few examples and tips:

- Organizing fund-raising activities.
- Tutoring/mentoring students.
- Becoming a teacher’s assistant.
- Joining a local Parent Teacher Association (PTA).
- Helping out with extracurricular activities.
- Offering time to assist with school networking and resource groups.

If you want the best for your child’s education, get involved. Time is crucial to all aspects of our daily lives. But time seems to be running out of supply for many busy families. From attending late meetings to participating in weekend conferences, parents seem to be “on full speed.” Many busy parents find it hard to juggle all of their daily tasks, including school participation. The good news is that participating in your child’s education can be easy and requires as much or as little time as you choose. The important fact to remember is that you are participating. No matter how large or small the task may be, your child will recognize your effort and tend to imitate you as a role model.

School participation can be as simple as:

- Communicating with the teacher through meetings, visits and e-mails.
- Volunteering your free time with field trips. Parties, etc…
- Periodically checking in your child’s classroom progress through phone calls or visits.
- Visiting a library, museum or event with your child.
- Attending Parent-Teacher Conferences.
- Teaching your child the value of education by showing an interest in reading writing and talking about educational concerns and topics.

The first step in participating with your child’s educational and school environment is to gather information about how to do so. The website, greatschools.net provides a list of informational resources that are relevant to parental participation:

- The school’s phone number and Web site URL;
- Name’s of the school’s secretary, principal and your child’s teacher;
- PTA president’s name, phone number and e-mail address;
There are countless ways a parent can show support for their child’s learning. The benefits derived from your active involvement in your child’s education are priceless. Through your support and participation, not only will your child benefit, but you will too! According to the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE), family-school partnerships help students not only excel and succeed school, but parents also gain confidence, teachers obtain the support they need, schools as a whole improve, and communities become more strongly united. No matter what age your children may be, they are always growing and changing. They need your encouragement, support and participation to guide them and expand that growth psychologically, emotionally, physically, socially and educationally.

---

**June / July – More Simple Ways to Lose Weight**

**For June**

1) Keep a pair of comfortable walking or running shoes in your car and office.
2) Make a Saturday morning walk a group habit.
3) Walk briskly in the mall.
4) Choose activities you enjoy and you’ll be more likely to stick with them.
5) Stretch before bed to give you more energy when you wake.

6) Take the long way to the water cooler.
7) Explore new physical activities.
8) Vary your activities, for interest and to broaden the range of benefits.
9) Reward and acknowledge your efforts.
10) Choose fruit for dessert.
11) Consume alcoholic beverages in moderation, if at all.
12) Take stairs instead of the escalator.
13) Conduct an inventory of your meal/snack and physical activity patterns.
14) Share an entrée with a friend.
15) Grill fruits or vegetables.

---

**For July**

1) Eat before grocery shopping.
2) Choose a checkout line without a candy display.
3) Make a grocery list before you shop.
4) Buy 100 percent fruit juices over soda and sugary drinks.
5) Swim with your kids.
6) Flavor foods with herbs, spices and other low-fat seasonings.
7) Remove skin from poultry before cooking to lower fat content.
8) Eat before you get too hungry.
9) Don’t skip breakfast.
10) Stop eating when you are full.
11) Snack on fruits and vegetables.
12) Top your favorite cereal with apples or bananas.
13) Try brown rice or whole-wheat pasta.
14) Include several servings of whole grain food daily.
15) When eating out, choose a small or medium portion.
16) If main dishes are too big, choose an appetizer or a side dish instead.
17) Ask for salad dressing “on the side.”
18) Don’t take seconds.
19) Try your burger with just lettuce, tomato and onion.
20) Try a green salad instead of fries.

Next month 15 more tips!!!

---

**Air Filters and Cleaners**

Perhaps you or a family member suffers from seasonal allergies, and you’ve heard that an air cleaner can keep pollen out of the house. Or, you may want to reduce cooking and smoke odors at home or in the office. How do you decide if you need an air cleaner? And if you do need one, which one is right for your situation?

Your first line of defense is to replace indoor air by fresh, outside air on a regular basis. You can open doors and windows and add exhaust fans. You also should minimize sources of contamination inside your home. For example, good housekeeping can help control dust and dust mite problems.

Common airborne particles range in size from .001 to 100 microns. A micron is about one twenty-five thousandth of an inch. To get an idea of size, a hair from your head is about 250 microns in diameter. Your body can filter larger contaminants above 10 microns in size. A regular furnace filter removes some other contaminants. Problems can occur when smaller particles are present or when someone is unusually sensitive to a particular contaminant. Smaller airborne particles like tobacco smoke and fine household dust can enter the deeper parts of the lungs. Air cleaners remove some but not all particles from the air.

Air cleaners can be divided into two basic groups: portable or table top models, and those you install with or in place of an existing furnace and air conditioner filter.

**Portable Air Cleaners**

*Portable air cleaners are made to clean air in smaller areas, not the whole house. Air cleaners usually use filters, electrical attraction, or ozone to remove small particles from the air.*

**Filters trap particles.** The finer the filter, the smaller the particles it traps. HEPA (high efficiency particulate arresting) filters are the best. They can capture up to 99 percent of particles down to 0.3 microns in size. But gas molecules, which include radon, tobacco smoke, etc., are extremely small and can still pass through a HEPA filter. An activated carbon or charcoal filter usually is added to trap gas molecules.

**Pleated** (also called “media” filters) use materials like the HEPA filters, but they capture fewer particles because they are less tightly packed. They are 40 to 95 percent effective and remove most household dust.

**Electrical attraction** is used in electronic cleaners. This type of cleaner uses electrostatic precipitation, static charge, or particle ionization to remove particles drawn in by a fan through a foam pre-filter. Larger particles are trapped at this point. Particles are then charged by a high-voltage wire and captured in the precipitating cell. A
carbon filter removes odors and a post-filter removes other particles.

When a pre-filter is used, the electrostatic precipitator can remove mold, bacteria, tobacco smoke, and most household dust. Regular maintenance is a must.

An electret cleaner uses polyester and cellulose fibers with a static charge to trap particles in addition to the foam pre-filter and carbon filter.

An negative ionizer also uses a foam pre-filter and carbon filter. It is unique because it has charged wires, which create ions. The fan blows these charged particles into the room and they collect on walls and room surfaces. The fan and pre-filter should reduce soiling and staining from the particles.

Ozone generation is a type of air cleaner that uses a high-voltage electrical charge to change oxygen to ozone. High concentrations of ozone can destroy gas molecules and some microorganisms, such as mold spores. The North Carolina Department of Environmental, Health and Natural Resources recommends that this type of cleaner NOT be used. Ozone can have adverse health effects.

Performance Standards. There are no universal standards, but you can ask about a unit’s clean air delivery rate, which is abbreviated “CADR.” This tells you the cubic feet the unit delivers each minute. Usually the CADR will show specifications for removing dust, pollen, and smoke. When two units have the same CADR, the one with the lower total air flow will be more efficient.

Maintenance. You may have to change or clean filters. With the electrostatic precipitator, you’ll need to wash the electronic cell every two to three months.

In-Duct Air Cleaners
Air cleaners can be designed to fit into the house’s heating and air conditioning system ductwork.

Pleated (media) filters are more efficient than the standard fiber filter, but not as effective as an electrostatic filter. The media filter is more expensive than a common furnace filter, and it requires more fan energy. It needs to be replaced regularly. It will last longer if you install a regular furnace filter in front of the pleated media filter.

Electret or electrostatic filters can be used to replace a standard furnace filter. An electrostatic filter installed in the return air duct near the furnace removes finer particles from the air. You will have to clean the removable dust collecting plate regularly.

The electrostatic precipitator is a more expensive alternative. These filters are as effective as portable units, but they must be installed by a contractor and may affect the air flow and efficiency of your furnace and air conditioning system.

If filters slow air flow through the ducts, your heating or air conditioning system must run longer. This increases your operating costs. If the filter is not properly fitted, unfiltered air may pass around it.
Filters that have no separate fan are effective only when the heating and cooling system fan is running.

**Summary**

If natural ventilation and exhaust fans do not take care of the problem, you may need an air cleaner. You need to decide whether you have problems in a room or small space or if you have air quality problems throughout the house. When the problems are throughout the house, in-duct filters are an alternative. Otherwise, a portable cleaner may be a better choice.

When considering air cleaners, compare the clean air delivery standard (CADR) and needed maintenance.

For more information on air quality inside your home, please call our office.

### Controlling Spending

When the family faces reduced income, take immediate action to stop all excess spending. Whether your situation is temporary or extended, you need to get the most for your money.

Studies have found that many families do not adjust their lifestyle for about six months after their income is reduced. That six months of ignoring the situation can bring disaster. When you take charge of your financial situation immediately, you are making a positive contribution to your family’s well being now and in the future.

Following basic money management principles can reduce stress and help you adjust to living on less income. Here is a list of research-tested-principles.

- Make a list of the family’s most important expenses while you have less income. (This means things you must have or do.)

- Make a family spending plan to determine where your money will go. Develop a family budget you can use to cope with your income situation.

- Decide where you will spend your money. Stick to your spending plan. With less income, each spending decision is critical.

Most people give high priority to fixed expenses such as rent or mortgage payments, insurance premiums, car payments, and installment debt. Flexible expenses such as food, utilities, clothing, and household expenses can be more easily adjusted to fit your income. Most people find it easier to cut back on flexible expenses.

All family members need to work together to reduce spending. When everyone pulls together, you are more likely to succeed in living on less.

Together, the family should go through the following list under each of the flexible expense categories. Check the ideas you think would help your family reduce spending. Add your family’s ideas to each list.

As you go through the list, ask how spending can be reduced:

- Can we substitute a less costly item?
• How can we conserve resources and avoid waste?

• Are there opportunities to cooperate with others by trading or sharing resources? Can we save if we do it ourselves?

• Can we do without?

Consider these questions when looking at categories such as food; utilities and household maintenance; transportation and upkeep; medical expenses; clothing and personal care; recreation and leisure; and childcare.

Summary
During challenging financial times, it is very important to control spending. Restrict purchases to “needed items” and go without items that are just “wants.” Before buying and item, ask yourself the following questions:

  • Do we already own one?
  • Can we do without it?
  • Can we postpone its purchase?
  • Can we substitute something else that costs less?
  • Can we use our skills to make it?

June/July Spotlight
Our New Extension Employee

My name is Larry Kent and as of March 2, 2009 I am the Program Assistant at your Onslow County Cooperative Extension office. I will be working with the Onslow County Water Quality Monitoring program, and the Agriculture Agents in their programs here in Onslow County.

Originally I’m from Greenville, Michigan. I have been associated with and/or living in Onslow County for the past number of years. Some of you may already know me as I have been working with the Onslow County “Farmers’ Market” as a volunteer for the past four years.

Agriculture is my passion. If there is anything I can do to help you, please feel free to contact me at 910-340-0009 or email me at: Larry_Kent@ncsu.edu. I look forward to working with each and all of you.

North Carolina Cooperative Extension
North Carolina State University
Onslow County Center
4024 Richlands Hwy
Jacksonville, North Carolina 28540

NON-PROFIT