



For Release: July-September 2004

Healthy Habits Build Healthy Kids

More children are overweight than ever before with major health problems such as diabetes and heart disease possibly facing them in the near future. The kinds and amounts of foods eaten along with the amount of physical activity a child engages in daily has an effect on his or her weight.

Children are drinking more soda pop and less milk than in the past. Today's food patterns include larger serving sizes, fewer family meals, more food eaten outside of home, and easy access to higher calorie "quick" foods all of which can contribute to unhealthy weight.

Children today also play less actively partly due to more TV watching, video game playing and time spent on the computer. There is also less opportunity in school for children to participate in physical education classes.

Putting a child on a diet is not the answer since this could result in health problems such as stunted growth in height, less dense bones, and low intake of important nutrients. Children put on diets often hide food for fear of being hungry. It's important to talk with a health care provider if a parent or caregiver is concerned about his or her child's weight. It may be suggested that the child increase daily activity and choose foods wisely, which could be a goal for all family members.

Choosing healthy foods, making time to play and be active every day can help all children feel their best. It will take some planning, but families can work together to make it easier for everyone to eat healthy and be physically active. Here are a few ideas from a booklet prepared by the Michigan

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FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

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Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) program staff at MSU Extension can answer questions or help you learn more about money management, parent, food, nutrition and health issues. MSU Extension educators integrate university and community resources to provide tools that help families succeed. For more information on FCS programs in Michigan, call your county MSU Extension office. Check the government pages of your phone book for contact information.

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Healthy Habits Build Healthy Kids, pg. 2

Departments of Community Health and Education called *Healthy Kids Healthy Weight. Tips for Families With Kids of all Shapes and Sizes*:

- Keep fruits and vegetables within easy reach. A bowl of whole fruit on the counter, canned fruit in its own juice kept in the cupboard or pre-washed and cut up vegetables in the refrigerator make healthy and easy-to-eat snacks.
- Have children eat breakfast either at home or at school if available. Starting out the day with healthy foods can prevent later overeating with the added bonus of helping children learn and behave better.
- If your child is thirsty, offer water. Water or low-fat milk or skim milk can be the beverages available for all family members at meals.
- Plan for fun family activities that also get everyone moving. Try walking, dancing, biking, playing catch or jumping rope.
- If there is a TV in your child's bedroom, take it out. Use the time that would have been spent sitting and watching TV being active instead.

For a copy of *Healthy Kids Healthy Weight. Tips for Families With Kids of all Shapes and Sizes* visit www.emc.cmich.edu/healthyweight and print your own, or order a free copy (while supplies last) at www.zoomerang.com/survey.zgi?p=WEB2G59LGQD7. Other brochures with ideas for parents on helping children eat healthy and be active can be found at www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard then select ESPH Collection and Parent's Place.

For more information on this topic and other food, nutrition, health, or money management issues contact the MSU Extension office. MSU Extension Family and Consumer Science educators are located in all 83 Michigan counties to integrate university and community resources to help families succeed.

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References:

Healthy Kids Healthy Weight. Tips for Families With Kids of all Shapes and Sizes. Michigan Department of Community Health and Michigan Department of Education, 2004. Access at www.emc.cmich.edu/healthyweight.

Promoting Healthy Weight for Children. Information for Professionals. Michigan State University Extension, Revised April 2004. Access at www.fcs.msue.msu.edu and select Resources then Nutrition Publications.

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