



NETA

**Nutrition Education Training
Academy Newsletter
For Early Childhood Providers**

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Eating Healthy! A Simple Choice or Not?

"A wise society nurtures and protects its future generations. Ensuring that all children are adequately fed is an action we should all be taking."



Almost daily we hear on TV and radio about the many benefits of good nutrition. Newspaper and magazine articles provide us with information about the concerns many health professionals have about the quality of children's diet. Every place we go, we hear how many children are choosing high fat or added sugars at the expense of nutrient-dense fruits, vegetables, grains and other healthy foods. Experts believe that current eating choices exacerbates the trend toward increasing obesity and other health problems among the Nation's young people.

With such an abundance of information, we should be on the right track. Right? The answer is not that simple. Children now have more food choices to make, they also eat out more often. It is estimated that twenty percent of children's snacks are obtained away from home. As children eat out more frequently, the nutritional quality of food away from home plays an important role in determining the overall quality of their diets. Children like adults, are also more sedentary despite the proven benefits of physical activity. More than 60% of American adults do not engage in physical activity and young children do not engage in vigorous physical activities for many reasons.

Meanwhile a growing number of households are food insecure due to insufficient resources to obtain food. Children who live in families that do not get enough food to eat are more likely to have poorer health than those with sufficient food. These children have less access to fresh produce, safe parks and recreational centers where they can participate in physical activities. Children who are food insecure may also eat foods with a higher caloric intake and tend to eat more when food is finally available.

Eating healthy is eating good nutritious meals full of fresh quality produce, rich in fiber, low in sodium. Eating healthy is necessary for body growth, for maintaining or restoring health and for the proper functioning of the brain and nervous system. Good nutrition helps a child learn, concentrate, play with positive social interactions with others. A poorly nourished child may be restless, irritable and more withdrawn. Children develop their food habits early in life and can have lifelong effects. Children most likely will learn to eat a good diet, if parents, teachers, adults and others with whom a child eats with also eat well. Children are great imitators, if you do not have good food habits, chances are children won't either.

Eating healthy is not as simple as it sounds. Overall the dietary quality tends to decline as children get older. To improve a child's diet, intake of fiber, calcium and iron need to increase; and limited intake of saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium. Children learn through hands on activities and interacting with others. Providing children with enriching environments and learning opportunities support the development and learning in the early childhood years.

Children's families that have difficulty buying enough food, may be eligible for several of the food assistance programs, food stamps, WIC, free or reduced-price school lunch, breakfast programs, after-school snacks. Information about some of these programs are included in this quarterly newsletter.

Food and Nutrition Assistance Programs



Many families need financial assistance to buy enough nutritious food. There are more at-risk than others because of the changes in the economy or other social conditions. Persons living in poverty are at-risk of having inadequate resources for food, housing, health care and other needs. Many children live in food-insecure households, which are households that have limited or uncertain availability of food due to inadequate resources.

A number of federal programs have been created to help families meet their food needs. **The Food Stamp Program** helps low-income families buy some of the foods they need for good health. It supplements their food budgets, stretches food dollars and ensures that children and families can have enough nutritious food. Many people who are eligible for this program are not participating, mostly because they are misinformed about eligibility requirements.



Early Childhood Providers working with families of limited income should encourage all those in need to apply for Food Stamps if they are low income:

Work full or part-time
Unemployed
Participate in Public Assistance
Homeless

Elderly or disabled (Elderly may qualify, even if other members do not)
Legal residents (Do not need to be citizens)

Food Stamp Program and eligibility standards can be obtained by calling 510-777-2300 locally or 1-800-698-1118 if outside the 510 area. People can also obtain information in one of the three sites listed below. To make sure that applicants have the proper documentation, encourage them to call the offices directly.

North County
4501 Broadway
Oakland, CA 94611

East County
6955 Foothill Blvd.
Oakland, CA 94605

South County
24041 Amador Ave
Hayward, CA 94544

Adapted from www.dss.cahwnet.gov/detser/foodstamps and www.nal.usda.gov/foodstamp



Food Stamp Credit Cards

No more coupons! Food Stamp participants in Alameda County will be able to use a plastic magnetic card similar to a credit card to access benefits at retailer's ATM's and Point of Sale (POS) terminals. Each participant will be given their own PIN number. This new automated system is the **Electronic Benefits Transfer** (EBT). EBT will reduce the stigma often associated with using public assistance benefits. It will reduce the risk of losing or getting benefits stolen and will eliminate waiting in lines at Food Stamp redemption centers. Other cash welfare benefits programs (CalWorks, General Assistance and Refugee Cash Aid) will also adapt to this system. To learn more about EBT contact the nearest social service office or the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Information at www.fns.usda.gov/fns or 703-305-2286.

Fruits and Vegetables Research

Adapted from 5 a Day News, Volume 2, Number 2 .Summer 2000

Dark green leafy vegetables such as spinach and broccoli contain vitamin K, which helps maintain strong bones according to the study funded by Agriculture Research Service, the U. S. Department of Agriculture. (*American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 2000:71(5): 1201-1208*)

Researchers say women who eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and moderate amounts of fats and sugar cut their risk of dying from cancer, heart disease and stroke by nearly a third. (*Journal of the American Medical Association 2000:283:2109-2115*)

Seasonal Healthy Foods

The fall season's produce is rich, flavorful, fresh, delicious and cheaper. Eating seasonal means eating only what is produced during the season it may mean trying some produce new to you or foods you may have never cooked. It is also a good time to visit small farms and buy directly from the farmer and get better prices for the produce. Some of the produce includes: *Beets, carrots, daikon, eggplant, squash, leeks, pumpkins, spinach, apples, persimmons and pomegranates.* **Happy Fall Season!**

Nutritious Seasonal Recipes

Oven-Roasted Sweet Potato Chips



Ingredients:

10 medium sweet potatoes
10 Tbs. Olive oil
Sprinkle sugar (brown sugar if available)
Sprinkle ground cinnamon (if available)

Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 450° F
2. Demonstrate how to cut sweet potatoes, using the cutting board, cut in half then slice into 1/2 to 3/8 inch wedges. No need to peel the potatoes.
3. Place the slices into a bowl and add oil and toss until coated.
4. Arrange slices on a baking sheet in a single layer. Sprinkle with sugar and cinnamon to taste.
5. Place slices in oven for 20-30 minutes checking frequently to make sure they don't burn but are slightly brown.

Makes enough for 20 students.

Applesauce

Ingredients:

12 large apples
1/3 cup sugar
1 Tbs. cinnamon
Dash of salt



Method:

1. Cut apples and remove the seeds
2. Place all of the apples in the pot; add enough water to cover the apples.
3. Add a pinch or two of cinnamon and a pinch of salt.
4. Cook in low heat until they are soft. Let it sit for a few minutes to cool off.
5. Get the children to puree the apples with a food mill or mash them with a potato masher or use a fork.
6. Add sugar and blend well.
7. Eat with crackers, bagels or crepes.

Makes 20 small servings.

Community Events

1. October 7th: Child Health Month and Child Health Day. The slogan is "Solution Before Problems", stresses health preventions. Children may not get sick as often if they practice good health habits. Sponsored by the American Academy of Pediatrics. For more information check www.aap.org.
2. November is American Education Month. Sponsored by the National Education Association. For more information log onto www.nea.org.
3. December is a holiday for many cultures. Explore the many celebrations with the children. Invite families from different cultures to your class to share their celebration rituals and folklore.

Children's Storybooks

1. Growing Vegetable Soup By: Lois Ehler, Voyager Book
In brightly colored collage illustrations, a father and child share the simple joys of planting, watering and watching seeds growing their garden. Then they cook them all up into a delicious soup, the recipe is included.
2. Everybody Cooks Rice By: Nora Dooley, Carolrhoda Books, Inc. 1991
Anthony is late for dinner. His sister goes from house to house looking for him. In each home, she finds families preparing rice in a different way. The book emphasizes the different tastes of rice when prepared by different ethnic groups. This multi-cultural dinner tale ends with several recipes for rice - from Barbados, Puerto Rico, Vietnam, India, China, Haiti and Italy.

Websites

1. Kids in the Garden: This site contains many gardening projects children can work on. <http://gardengatenmagazine.com/projects/kid.html>
2. Dairy Council of California: This site provides health and nutrition information and interactive tools for kids and teachers. <http://www.dairycouncilofca.org>
3. California Food Policy Council: Council Food Policy Advocates is a private nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutrition and affordable food. CFPA employs a variety of strategies to develop and implement public policies that recognize the value of adequate nutrition and its fundamental contribution to good health and development, education and productivity. <http://www.cfpa.net>

Comments & Suggestions

If you have any comments or suggestions, please e-mail us at cealameda@ucdavis.edu

Please take a moment to complete our survey. We look forward to hearing from you.

Lucrecia Farfan-Ramirez
County Director
(510) 567-6812

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