

NETA Quarterly News

Nutrition, Physical Activity & Gardening for
Early Childhood Providers



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Diabetes—Reversing an Epidemic

Diabetes is a disease often associated with obesity. The risk of diabetes is greater among African American, Latino, and Native American children. At Oakland Unified School District's (OUSD) Early Childhood Centers 28% of children are African Americans, 45% are Latinos, and 1% are Native Americans.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) predictions are very bleak—one in three U.S. children born in 2000 could develop diabetes in their lifetime. An increased number of children at younger ages are being diagnosed with the disease that was once called adult-onset diabetes now called Type 2 diabetes. This is a condition where the body loses its ability to produce enough insulin to regulate blood sugar, and has now become one of the most common diseases of childhood. Young children with diabetes will have the disease longer and have a greater chance of developing serious complications, like heart disease, stroke, kidney failure, blindness, and amputations.

What is the connection between obesity and diabetes? "Diabetesity" is the term used to describe diabetes connected to obesity. As children gain weight, their risk of diabetes goes up. In the last two decades, diabetesity in children has been reported with increased frequency.

Do schools have a role in the prevention of diabetesity? YES! Young children spend most of the day in school. They may eat two of their meals, plus snacks, at school. OUSD's food service department is working in partnership with many agencies to improve food offered in schools. Early childhood educators can help by doing as many of the following as possible:

- Incorporating nutrition and physical activity into daily routine.
- Teaching children to eat more fruits and vegetables by doing some of the activities, such as taste tests, included in the monthly "Tips for Busy Early Childhood Professionals."
- Keeping unhealthy foods, fast foods, and sugar sweetened beverages out of the classroom, as mandated by

your School Wellness Policy.

- Using "From the Garden to the Classroom" (Nutrition Matters! Module 2), do nutrition in the garden activities.



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- California Center for Public Health Advocacy. An Early Warning Sign: Diabetes Deaths in California Legislative Districts, February 2004. http://www.publichealthadvocacy.org/policy_briefs/study_documents/Diabetes_Full_Report.pdf

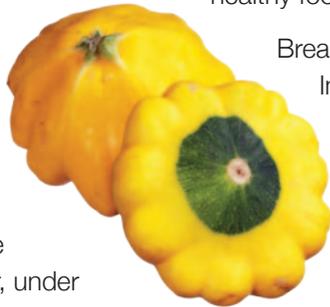


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Balancing Act to Prevent Diabetes

Education and regular exposure to nutritious meals and snacks help shape children's eating behaviors. Providing parent education, along with changes in school, helps children get messages of healthful eating and being active. Starting at an early age, children begin to shape long-lasting skills that will impact their lifestyle into adulthood. Teachers working with young children have a great opportunity to influence children's eating behavior and promote active lifestyles, and help prevent some of the chronic diseases, such as diabetes.

Include a classroom activity to get children moving every day. A simple maze, either inside or outside, can get the children active. Use stations and lead the children in "Follow the Leader:" around the chair, under the table, behind the chalkboard, over the rug, in the kitchen, out the door, etc.



Preschool children benefit from repeating activities. Discuss the importance of daily physical activity and healthy foods for good health.

Break up the classroom routine. Include outdoor garden activities that link food and gardening. Children will have an opportunity to move, be active in planting, watering, harvesting, preparing, and eating fresh vegetables and fruits. Children are developing fine and large motor skills. Bending, walking, and stretching are some of the activities they can do in the garden. Planting seeds (Use NETA's Nutrition Matters, Module 2, Lesson 2 on seeds becoming plants), making labels with names and shapes, pulling herb leaves, watering vegetables, and harvesting are a few activities to help develop fine motor skills. Write the tasks on the left side of a poster board and the children's names across the top. Every time the children do one of the activities, have them mark the chart.

Include tasting and eating the foods from the garden. Reinforce

variety and quantity for both healthy foods and physical activity. When you talk about watering seeds and plants, include in your nutrition lesson the need for children to drink water and avoid sweetened beverages. The next NETA Newsletter will have more information on water and "rethinking your drink."

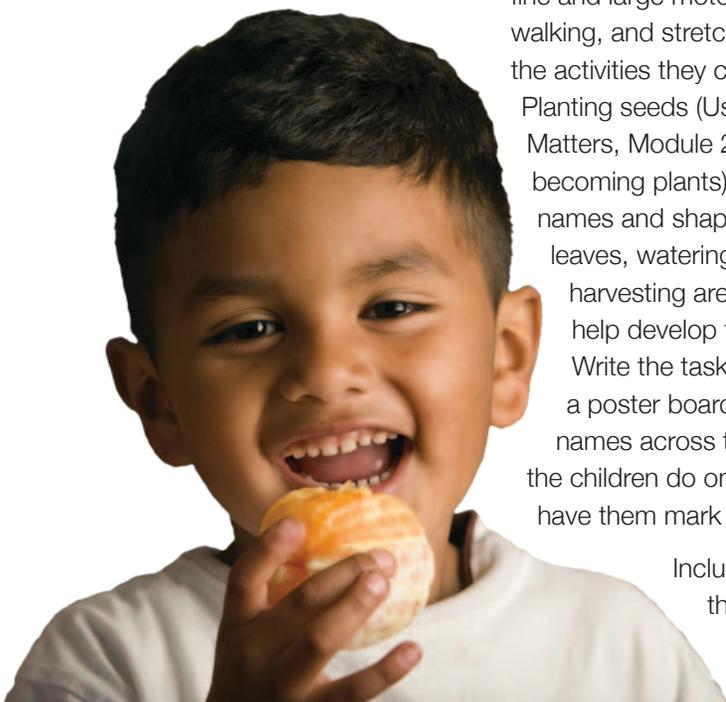
Check your NETA's *Nutrition Matters!* and *Tips for Busy Professionals* for more ways you can incorporate healthful behaviors to help prevent diabetes and overweight. or contact the NETA Program at (510) 567-6812 or <http://neta.ucdavis.edu/>.

References

- American Diabetes Association. Preventing Type 2 Diabetes in Children and Teens. *Diabetes Spectrum*, 11/05.
- Kaufman, F.R. Type 2 Diabetes in Children and Young Adults: A "New Epidemic." *Clinical Diabetes* 20(4):217, 2002.



Photos: Network for a Healthy California (except seedling, iStockphoto)



Good Eats from Around the World

Foods provide great opportunities to learn about other cultures and learn about foods from different parts of the world. The U.S. is a country of many immigrants from around the world and American children eat many ethnic foods, but they often have little idea where they come from.

People came thousands of miles and brought with them their cultural patterns and traditions, including their traditional diets. In California, we have a large presence of Asian and Mexican populations. Both Mexican and Asian foods have become part of the California culture. As new groups of immigrants come, they bring along ethnic foods prepared with spices and herbs, producing different flavors and aromas. When a new ethnic food becomes popular, the demand for certain vegetables like

bitter melon and chayote increases. California has quickly adopted and integrated ethnic ingredients, giving rise to new California cuisines. One way to celebrate the richness of our diversity in the school is to grow Asian, Mexican, Italian, Spanish, and other ethnic vegetables and to invite parents from those countries to prepare them, while sharing the rituals associated with the dishes. Use school events as an opportunity to introduce new ways of preparing fruits and vegetables.

Kale is a great example of a vegetable with much culture and tradition. Originating in Asia Minor, it is popular in Scandinavia, Germany, Holland, and Scotland. Brought to the United States by English settlers, kale is now a favorite traditional food in the southern states. Kale is a member of the cabbage family, like other cooking greens such as collards, mustard greens, turnip greens and bok choy. Most cooked greens provide an excellent source of vitamin A, vitamin C, and vitamin K (bok choy, collards, kale, Swiss chard).

Use NETA's *Nutrition Matters!* curriculum, Module 1, Activity 3-2 and discuss foods from around the world. Follow NETA *Tips for Busy Early Childhood Professionals 'G is for Greens,'* Volume 3 for additional taste test, recipe, and activity ideas for kale and other cooked greens.

Recipe

SEARED KALE

Makes 6 servings. 1 cup per serving.

Note: This recipe makes 6 adult servings at 1 cup each. To make this for your classroom, adjust the taste tests to ¼ cup servings; this recipe makes 24 taste tests at ¼ cup each.

Ingredients:

- 1½ pounds kale (or other greens)
- 2 Tablespoons vegetable oil
- 4 chopped garlic cloves
- 1 cup water
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 Tablespoons vinegar, cider

Preparation:

1. Clean the greens thoroughly and cut stems away. Dry well and tear into salad pieces or slice across leaf into ½-inch pieces.
2. In a large deep pot or skillet with a cover, sauté garlic in oil. Add greens in pan with 1 cup water.
3. Cover pan and steam for 4 minutes.
4. Uncover, stir constantly until greens shrink. Add pepper and continue



to stir on high until mixture is thoroughly wet.

5. Sprinkle cider vinegar on mixture. Cover.

6. Turn off heat. Let stand until ready to serve.

Nutrition information per serving:

Calories 100, Carbohydrate 12 g, Dietary Fiber 2 g, Protein 4 g, Total Fat 5 g, Saturated Fat 0.5 g, Trans Fat 0 g, Cholesterol 0 mg, Sodium 49 mg

Recipe adapted from:

SNAP-Ed Connection, USDA & Food Family Fun, USDA, Team Nutrition. http://recipefinder.nal.usda.gov/index.php?mode=display&rec_id=139

References

- CDC, Fruit & Vegetable of the Month: Cooking Greens. <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/month/greens.html>.
- Cooked Greens, Harvest of the Month. http://www.harvestofthemonth.com/download/Fall/CookedGreens/CookedGreens_Edu.pdf

Culture, Food, and Physical Activity

OSD Early Childhood Centers have a very diverse group of children. It is the perfect opportunity to learn about games children play in other countries. Games from around the world have a lot of similarities, but often they have different names and have a cultural twist. For example in Australia, “Duck, Goose” is played by tapping someone on the head, but in India it is played by dropping a handkerchief beside the person.

“1,2,3 Dragon” is the name of a game originating in China and is played by small children usually to celebrate the New Year. Dragons are important because they mean good luck.

How the game is played? The object is to tag the tail as many times as you can

while you are the head. The line must stay together the whole time.

- 10 or more children form a line with each player holding the shoulders of the person in front of them.
- The person in the front is the “Head.”
- The person at the back of the line is the “Tail.”
- The tail shouts “1, 2, 3 dragon.”
- The head leads the line moving slightly to the right and left and tries to catch the tail.
- The line must stay together the whole time.



- If the dragon breaks, the dragon dies. The head moves to the end of the line and becomes the tail.
- If the head catches the tail the play stops. The head goes to the end and the second person is now head.

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- Culture, Food and Physical Activity. Physical Activity and Nutrition Outside School Hours, Queensland Health. <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/ph/Documents/hpu/24730.pdf>
- Cultural influence on youth’s motivation of participation in physical activity. Journal of Sport Behavior, Dec 2004 by Jin H. Yan, Penny McCullagh. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb6401/is_4_27/ai_n29136918/

Photo: Network for a Healthy California



This material was produced by the California Department of Public Health’s *Network for a Healthy California* with funding from USDA SNAP, known in California as CalFresh (formerly Food Stamps). These institutions are equal opportunity providers and employers. CalFresh provides assistance to low-income households and can help buy nutritious foods for better health. For CalFresh information, call 1-877-847-3663. For important nutrition information, visit www.cachampionsforchange.net.

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