



NETA

Nutrition Education Training Academy Newsletter For Early Childhood Providers

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Welcome

The Nutrition Education Training Academy (NETA) welcomes Early Childhood Professionals to our Quarterly Newsletter! You will be receiving four nutrition-based newsletters covering a variety of topics geared towards children ages 3-5 years. The intent of this newsletter is to be an informative guide to current research and trends in the field of nutrition. It is filled with community events, delicious recipes, and hands-on activities, that will provide teachers with lesson plan ideas and enhance children's creativity and diversity.



Inside this issue:

Childhood Obesity

What is obesity? Obesity is defined as an excess in body fat relative to lean muscle mass. Body fat accumulates when food intake is greater than the amount of physical activity, over a significant period of time.

Recent studies indicate that the prevalence of childhood obesity is increasing at an alarmingly high rate. Obese children have a higher probability of becoming obese adults, and are at an increased risk for heart disease, diabetes, respiratory disease, and high blood pressure.

The following are factors that contribute to a child's weight status:

Food Intake	Environment
Physical Activity	Socio-demographics
Genetics	Culture

The most important and influential factors are food intake and physical activity. Children are consuming more high fat, sugar, fried and junk foods on a daily basis. Along with this, the level of physical activity has decreased dramatically, leaving the lifestyles of children to be much more sedentary than ever before. Television viewing and video game playing has replaced outdoor activity and playtime. The combination of poor eating habits and the lack of physical activity is the cause for potential health risks and illness.

Nutrition education should take place in school and at home in effort to improve our children's dietary habits and lifestyle. Diet and exercise is the key towards good health. Encourage children to eat more fruits and vegetables each day and to participate in a variety of sports and recreational activities.

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Early Spring Tips for Young Gardeners

In an era where the average kid spends 4 to 6 hours or more per day either playing video games or watching television, less time is spent outside being physically active. Let's pair this with gardening being America's favorite past time. Who then is gardening? Apparently, more adults than kids. So teachers, let's get those kids outside into the garden!

If they grow it, they will eat it! By starting a garden at your school, you will automatically increase your student's interest to try new vegetables, and lead them on the path towards better nutrition. A great early spring activity for your students is to build a mini greenhouse.

Mini Greenhouse

Materials:

- 1 large pot (with drainage holes)
- 1 packet vegetable seeds
- 1 small container without holes(i.e yogurt container)
- Potting soil
- 2 Coat hangers
- 1 large, clear, plastic bag.

Method:

1. Fill large pot with potting soil.
2. Nestle the small container filled with water down into the center of the pot, so the top is at soil level.
3. Bend two coat hangers so they arch to make a cross structure (Sticks of the same height may also be used).
4. Place the plastic bag over the hangers or stick (larger bags work better because you can tuck them under the container).
4. Plant seeds. Different types of lettuce, such as arrugula, mazuna, and red lettuce, are fun to grow and kids can taste the different flavors.
5. Water seeds after planting, and make sure soil stays moist.
6. The water will evaporate from the container in the center, rise to the top, and drip down like rain onto the new plants. While the plants respire, they create heat, which is trapped and warms the air and soil of the potted environment.
7. Make sure the water in the container is always full.
8. Place in a sunny spot inside or out.

Gardening & Physical Activity

Here are a few garden activities that kids especially love. They will get much more exercise than they expect, and have fun doing it.

- Moving wheelbarrows (with teacher's help) or buckets of soil, compost or mulch (usually woodchips)
- Raking
- Sifting compost
- Digging a garden bed – loosening clumps and turning soil
- Digging out a plant or big weed

Finger Food Safety

Toddlers love to feed themselves. It is important to be aware of how to prevent food from lodging in their small airways. At the Children's Nutrition Research Center (CNRC) in Houston, Texas, nutritionists provided the following advice about finger foods for children 3 years of age and younger:

- Check baked goods for nuts, which are the number one food-related choking hazard for young children.
- Avoid giving hard or difficult-to-chew foods like raw carrots or other crunchy vegetables, hard candy, jellybeans, and lollipops.
- Spread thick and sticky peanut butter very thinly.
- Modify the shape and texture of firm and round foods.
 - *Cook carrots, potatoes, and other hard vegetables until soft, and cut into small pieces.
 - *Cut grapes into quarters
 - *Cut hot dogs into fine lengthwise sticks.
 - *Dice meats.
 - *Chop apples and firm fruits into very small pieces.
- Keep an eye on small children when they are eating. They might eat in a hurry, stuff too much food in their mouths, or chew their food inadequately.
- Feed small children in a relaxed atmosphere and only when they are seated. Do not allow children to run or play with food while chewing.
- Train toddlers to chew food thoroughly before swallowing or trying to speak.

The CNRC experts also advise that child caretakers receive appropriate emergency training, including how to perform the Heimlich maneuver and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) techniques

Quick & Nutritious Recipes

Creamy Fruit Smoothies

Ingredients:

2 cups of mixed fruit (apples, pears, grapes)
2 cups of orange juice
2 cups of vanilla yogurt
2 medium bananas, peeled, and sliced
5-7 ice cubes

Method:

1. Puree all ingredients in a blender until smooth.
2. Enjoy!

Makes 12 small servings.



Steamed Collard Greens

Ingredients:

3 big bunches of collard greens
2 cloves garlic (chopped)
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 teaspoon sugar
2 teaspoons lemon juice
Salt and pepper to taste

Method:

1. Remove collard leaves from stems and chop leaves.
2. Heat oil in a skillet over medium flame.
3. Sauté garlic for 30 seconds.
4. Add chopped greens, sugar, lemon juice, and stir.
5. Cover and cook over a medium flame.
6. Cook until greens are wilted and soft—about 15-20 minutes.
7. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Makes 20 small servings.

Community Events

1. "Breastfed Babies Welcome Here" is a packet to give a message that your childcare program supports breastfeeding Moms. It contains a poster and 2 booklets, one for staff that describes all you need to know about breast feeding from handling breast milk to feeding breast-fed babies. It also has a guide for mothers. Order your copy from: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition services, 3101 Park Center drive, Alexandria, VA 22303.
2. Free mini-posters - Hand washing, Cleaning and Disinfecting the Childcare Environment, Car Seat Law, Immunizations, No smoking - all Alameda County Health Services at 208-5963.
3. Immunization Update Workshops - Learn about new requirements and how to assess immunization records. Many hands on tools to help you, washed down with some pizza. April 3rd, 7-9pm, at BANANAS, call 658-7101 to reserve a space; April 24th Alameda county 4 C's, 582-2182.
4. Early Childhood Conference: Our Focus: The Child! - Conference 2001, April 21st, 8-5pm, Chabot College. Call 925-371-3835 for more info.

Children's Storybooks

1. **Good Enough to Eat: A Kid's Guide to Food and Nutrition** (ages 4-8)
By: Lizzy Rockwell, Harpercollins Juvenile Books, 1999.
The bright, cheerful pictures focus on preschoolers preparing and eating foods and using them to grow, breathe, move, stay warm, and fight germs. There's a food guide pyramid, a page of healthy fun recipes for adults and kids to cook together, and playful pages that show kids dressed up as astronauts, skeletons, clowns, and pirates demonstrating the importance of vitamins and minerals: the foods that contain them and how the body uses them. The endpapers illustrate the main food groups, with individual dishes and facts about how many servings you need a day of each group, from fruits and dairy products to fats, oils, and sweets.
2. **The Race Against Junk Food** (ages 4-8)
By: Anthony Buono and Roy Nemerson, Hcom Inc, 1997.
A fun filled adventure introducing the Snak Posse (Super Nutritionally Active Kids). Snak Posse Jr. are fruit and vegetable kids who want children to know that eating healthy and being healthy is cool! Colorful and exciting, see them win the relay race against junk food! This is a 40 page, full color children's book.

Websites

1. Dairy Council of California: This site provides health and nutrition information and interactive tools for kids.
<http://www.Dairycouncilofca.org>
2. Healthy Choices for Kids: Lesson plans for better eating.
www.healthychoices.org
3. Food and Nutrition Resources for Grades Preschool through 6: Web Links for Teachers.
www.kidfood.org/teachers/t_links.html

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Comments & Suggestions



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

We look forward to hearing from you.

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