

Food For Thought – Encouraging Healthy Lifestyles

Topics to be covered:

1. What is a “healthy diet”?
 - a. What foods to include
 - b. What foods to avoid
 - c. Adequate calorie intake vs over eating
2. Keeping kids active
 - a. Health benefits
 - b. Mental benefits
 - c. Challenges and how to overcome them
3. Body image issues and eating disorders
 - a. What to do to avoid them
 - b. Signs that a child has a problem
 - c. What to do about it

Why is healthy eating and exercise an issue for kids?

- Poor diet, lack of exercise can have long term health consequences (heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, depression and other mental health issues). E.g- Atherosclerosis (ie- “hardening of the arteries”) actually begins in childhood.
- If healthy habits are not learned as a child, they likely will not develop as an adult
- Fewer kids are eating breakfast
- Increased demands on family time- less family meals together
- Increased eating out which usually means “fast food”
- Increased calories from snacks- up to 1/3 for most kids. Usually means packaged, processed, high sugar foods
- Increase in consumption of sweetened beverages and less milk and water
- Unhealthy levels of sodium intake in kid’s diets
- Kids are being bombarded by the media with ads for unhealthy foods (most frequently advertised foods are high-sugar breakfast cereals, fast food, sweetened beverages, frozen dinners, cookies, candy)
- Kids may not have role models to help them make healthy choices
- Limited time during lunch at school
- Unhealthy choices for school lunch
- By teen years, peer pressure is more important than parent’s influence on food choices
- Growth in puberty dramatically increases appetite
- Foods that kids like and are readily available tend to be mostly “empty calories”, so they eat more than if they were eating high protein, high fiber foods

Making good food choices:

- Select a mix of foods from the five food groups: vegetables, fruits, grains, low-fat dairy, and quality protein sources, including lean meats, fish, nuts, seeds and eggs.
- Aim for 5 servings of vegetables per day, 2-3 servings of lean protein, 2-3 servings of low fat dairy.
- Choose whole grain vs refined grains (ie- white flour, starchy foods) whenever possible
- Make healthy foods and beverages should readily available and in plain sight on the kitchen table or counter, or in the front of the shelf in the refrigerator.
- High-calorie foods should be less visible – wrapped in foil rather than clear wrap, and placed in the back of the fridge or pantry.
- Avoid highly processed foods, high calorie sweetened snacks (i.e.- almost anything that comes in a package)
- Read labels to look at the amount of sugar in foods (including corn syrup!)
- Use small amounts of sugar, salt, fats and oils with highly nutritious foods to enhance enjoyment and consumption, not overwhelm it.
- Buy fewer sugar-sweetened beverages (limit to 8 oz per day)
- Allow sweetened, high calories snacks as a treat or for a special celebration
- If fast food is the only option, encourage healthy choices (ask for nutrition guide and discuss with kids)
- Give kids buy in for making good food choices- take them to the grocery store or farmer's market, ask them to help pick out recipes and help prepare and cook them.

Avoiding overeating:

- Control when food is available and when to eat it
- Serve meals in appropriate portions plated out. Not “family style”.
- Encourage kids to eat slowly, concentrate on what they are eating. (Eating while distracted leads to increased calorie consumption.)
- Provide a social context for meals (“family time”)
- Encourage them to listen to their body for hunger cues and cues that they are full
- When they ask for a snack ask why- are you hungry? Bored? Stressed? Eating because you saw food on TV? Eating because everyone else is eating?
- Children often confuse thirst cues for hunger cues. Make sure they are getting adequate water.
- Offer a wide variety of foods and encourage kids to try new things (it takes 8-12 times of trying a food before a true food aversion can really be established)
- Try to pick foods high in protein, fiber- will fill them up and give them sustained energy
- Do not pressure kids to eat certain foods (leads to food dislikes and picky eaters)
- Do not restrict them from eating certain foods (increased interest in “forbidden foods”)

BECOME A GOOD ROLE MODEL FOR HEALTHY EATING FOR YOUR LITTLE!

Keeping Kids Active

- Increased cardiovascular health
- Increased muscle mass
- Less problems with aches and pains, injuries
- Improved academic performance and concentration
- Improved self-esteem and mental well being
- Creating good habits that will last a life-time
- Opportunity for families to spend time together

Challenges to keeping kids active:

- Lack of activity in school- less gym time, recess time
- Increased availability of “screen time”- computers, T.V., phones, tablets, etc.
- May feel awkward or uncomfortable if they are over-weight, not skilled in sports
- Many sports programs require teens to be elite athletes rather than playing for fun
- Limited availability of safe places to play and exercise (especially in Wisconsin winters!)

Ways to keep kids active:

- Discuss that 60 minutes of activity a day is the goal.
- Trick kids into exercise through fun activities
- Reduce sedentary behaviors- limit “screen time” to 2 hours per day
- Designate media-free times together (dinner, family activities), as well as media-free locations at home (bedrooms, dinner table).
- Limit the number of TV sets in the home. Remove the TV and other media from the bedroom and the kitchen.
- Encourage good sleep habits- less than 9 hours of sleep per night associated with increased rates of obesity in kids
- Encourage families to enjoy physical activities together
- Outdoor activities: going to a park, playground or walking/bicycle trails, dog walking
- Indoor activities: bowling, indoor gym or pool, active video games (Just Dance, Wipeout, Nickelodeon Fit, Kinect Rush, Walk It Out, Wii-Sports Resort, Raving Rabbids)
- Going shopping- take an extra 1-2 laps around the store or mall together
- Walk to a destination rather than driving
- Use stairs vs elevator
- Park at the back of the parking lot
- Fit bits, pedometers???

BECOME A GOOD ROLE MODEL FOR STAYING ACTIVE!

Body image issues and eating disorders

- Never put a child on a “diet”. Focus on healthy foods they can have rather than foods they are not allowed.
- Focus on food as a necessary source of fuel for their bodies
- Avoid discussing weight or having children weigh themselves
- Focus on positive attributes rather than body shaming
- Avoid activities that may make them feel uncomfortable about their body (going to a crowded beach or pool).
- Watch for signs of an eating disorder- weighing frequently, comparing their weight or body shape to others, preoccupied with food, restricting foods, binge eating, isolating themselves from friends, sudden loss of weight, statements of feeling “fat”, rigid exercise routine, complaints of stomach problems, irregular or missed periods, difficulty concentrating.
- If you have concerns about an eating disorder, let their parent or guardian know and suggest seeing a counselor ASAP.

www.nationaleatingdisorders.org

Questions???