

Health and Safety E-News for Caregivers and Teachers

November 2011



Obesity Prevention in Child Care

In June 2011, First Lady Michelle Obama unveiled a new initiative under the Let's Move! program, **Let's Move! Child Care**. **Let's Move! Child Care** is a new effort to work with child care providers to help our youngest children get off to a healthy start. The *Strive for Five*, Goals for a healthier future will be highlighted in this newsletter.

Physical Activity

Physical activity and movement are an essential part of the development, learning and growth of young children. Since many children are in child care throughout the week, it is important for you, as a child care provider, to give youngsters of all ages daily opportunities to be physically active in a safe play space, surrounded by positive and responsive grown-ups like you.

Ways to keep children moving

- Have them act out a story as it's being read to them
- Encourage them to move like different animals during transitions from one activity to another
- Break the curriculum up a bit by taking physical activity breaks during the day and have the children "take 5 or 10" to stretch, march around the room, do jumping jacks, or an activity of their choice
- Put on some music with a beat and let the children dance, dance, dance.

Benefits of infants moving

Getting down on the floor to move helps infants:

- Explore their environment
- Develop motor skills
- Build strength and coordination
- Increase body awareness
- Learn valuable social skills with peers

"We have gardens for the children to work in—a butterfly garden, veggie garden, and pumpkin patch." – Beth Johnson, Montessori Teacher

Physical Activity helps children

- Stay at a healthy weight
- Reduce the risk of feeling stressed or depressed and developing obesity-related illnesses (type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and unhealthy cholesterol levels)
- Build their strength flexibility and endurance
- Enhance their motor skills, social skills, and brain development
- Develop and maintain strong bones
- Sleep better
- Feel confident about themselves and their bodies as they grow

Screen Time

In early care and education settings, media viewing and computer use should not be permitted for children younger than two years. For children two years and older in early care and education settings, total media time should be limited to not more than 30 minutes once a week.

Spending time in front of a screen can get in the way of exploring, playing, and interacting with grown-ups and their tiny peers — all of which encourage learning and healthy physical and social development.

Food

As a child care provider, you have a powerful opportunity to teach kids' taste buds to appreciate wholesome foods — before they can learn differently. And, with a little patience, even the fussiest young diners can learn to like healthy foods.

Opt for healthier alternatives

Try offering these wholesome snack options in place of traditionally less-nutritious snacks that kids often crave:



(Cont. on page 2)

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<i>Instead of</i>	<i>Try</i>
Sugary beverages	Frozen cubes of 100% fruit juice in cups of water
Cookies	Graham crackers dipped in unsweetened applesauce
Sugary Cereal	Mix different shapes of whole-grain cereals. Such as oat O's, bran squares, and corn flakes
Potato chips	Baked vegetable chips
Crackers	Whole-grain crackers with apple butter or fruit
Cheese puffs	Thinly sliced vegetables and low-fat ranch dip
Cupcakes	Zucchini or carrot mini-muffins
Ice cream	Yogurt and fruit parfait
Gummy snacks	Fresh fruit, cut in small pieces

The eating habits and attitudes about food formed in the early years often last a lifetime. New food acceptance may take eight to fifteen times of offering a food before it is eaten.



Beverages

What children drink can have a major effect on how many calories they consume and how much calcium they get to build strong bones. That said milk and water should be your main "go-to" drinks for toddlers and preschoolers.

Here are some helpful hints about how much of which kinds of beverages kids should get at what age — and which drinks to avoid altogether.

Water

When it comes to keeping kids hydrated, it doesn't get much better than plain old water. And it's wise to serve toddlers and preschoolers only water at meals — so that they don't get filled up with milk or juice, making it less likely they'll have room to eat.

Milk

- Infants (up to 12 months old) should get only breast milk and/or formula — never cow's milk.
- From 1 year (12 months) to 2 years (24 months) old, stick to whole milk or reduced fat (2%) milk for those at risk for obesity or hypercholesterolemia — toddlers need the dietary fats to help their brains and bodies develop and grow like they should
- For 2- to 5-year-olds, start serving fat-free (skim) and low-fat (1%) milk

Juice

Babies don't need any juice at all. And 4-6 ounces of juice a day (that's less than one cup) is more than enough for children over age 1. Just make sure it's 100% fruit juice — not fruit drink, punch, or cocktail.

Infant Feeding

As a child care provider, an important thing you can do for babies is support their parents' decisions about infant feeding, especially the mother's breastfeeding (nursing) efforts.

Facilities should

- Encourage and support breastfeeding
- Provide arrangements such as
 - Designate a place set aside for breastfeeding
 - Designate a private area with an outlet for mothers to pump their breast milk
 - Create a positive environment

Breast milk helps to

- curb obesity
- defend against infections
- protect against a number of conditions — like asthma, diabetes, and sudden infant



Resources

Websites

Healthy Child Care America
www.healthychildcare.org

Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs, 3rd Edition
<http://nrckids.org/>

Let's Move! Child Care
<http://www.healthykidshealthyfuture.org/content/hkhf/home/welcome.html>

Preventing Childhood Obesity in Early Care and Education Programs
http://nrckids.org/CFOC3/PDFVersion/preventing_obesity.pdf

HealthyChildren.org Obesity Section
<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/obesity/Pages/default.aspx>