

(Feb. 10, 2020) – Thousands of northern Colorado students and teachers take on a challenge every February to be healthier, but this year, there is a new twist.

The Healthy Kids 5210+ Challenge – started by UHealth’s Healthy Kids Club about 15 years ago – is now running full-steam in 100 northern Colorado schools from Walden to Fort Lupton.

For years, students, staff and family members have adopted and tracked four key healthy nutrition and activity habits every day for the month of February as part of the contest. And this year, organizers added a “plus” to the name of the challenge to represent one more vital habit families need to work on: getting enough sleep.

So what is 5210+?

- 5 - Eat five servings of fruits and veggies.
- 2 - Limit recreational screen time to less than two hours.
- 1 - Be active for at least one hour.
- 0 - Drink zero sugary drinks.
- + - Plus, get nine or more hours of sleep.

Children and teens who don’t get enough sleep are more likely to have focus and behavior problems at school in addition to other health problems, including obesity, type 2 diabetes, poor mental health and injuries, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But getting enough sleep can help them pay attention, stay calm and remain on task. It also can improve a person’s mood and keep them from getting sick.

“Mental health is such a big focus for our schools,” said Laurie Zenner, supervisor and co-founder of the UHealth Healthy Kids Club program. “And because sleep is such a critical component of both physical and mental health, it’s a perfect addition to the challenge.”

The amount of sleep a person needs depends on age:

- Ages 3-5: Need 10-13 hours.
- Ages 6-12: Need 9-12 hours.
- Ages 13-18: Need 8-10 hours.
- Adults: Need 8 or more hours.

In addition to the health rewards of this challenge, students and staff members who track at least 80 healthy habits during the month will earn 5210+ T-shirts. And participant schools are in the running for more than \$20,000 in prize money that will be awarded to schools with the highest percentage of participants. All prize money, which will be announced in May, will be dedicated to support physical education equipment or school wellness initiatives.

In addition to the student and staff logs that participants fill out all month long, the challenge provides families with a log that gives them a different goal for each day.

In 2019, 95 schools in northern Colorado participated in the challenge, according to Zenner. Approximately 22,000 logs from students, staff members and families were completed and submitted.

“The fact that the challenge has grown every year is a strong indicator that health and wellness is a priority for our schools and families,” Zenner said. “The 5210+ Challenge is valued by schools as an important part of their wellness efforts.”

Healthy Kids Club has been teaching kids healthy habits and offering programs to get kids active since 1998. In addition to the annual 5210+ Challenge, Healthy Kids Club coordinates the Healthy Kids and Fit.Teen Run Series; the Fit Families FITPASS program; the BstrongBfit program; the Healthy Kids, Healthy Start program; and other efforts that support healthy children and families.

For more about Healthy Kids Club or the 5210+ Challenge or to print out additional challenge logs, go to healthykidsclub.org.

About UCHealth

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