

## *12 Ways to Have a Healthy Holiday Season*

December 2008

In honor of the 12 days of Christmas, Coulee Region Childhood Obesity Coalition members have developed 12 ideas families can use to make this holiday season a healthy one!

**#1 Activate your holiday traditions**—Does your normally active lifestyle go out the window during the busy holiday season? Start some new holiday traditions...visit Rotary lights (walk don't ride around the park!), go for a hike in Hixon Forest or on one of the area trails & when we get enough snow—try cross country skiing or snow shoeing!

**#2 Make every bite count**—Fill ½ your plate at meal time with fruits & veggies—they are low in calories, fill you up & give you lots of nutrients & antioxidants to keep you healthy & help you fight disease.

**#3 Lighten up your holidays** –Try lightening up holiday favorites with low fat options. Substitute apple sauce, pumpkin puree or mashed bananas for oil in some of your favorite holiday cakes, cookies or breads. Skim the fat from your gravy, use low calorie or fat free salad dressings & calorie reduced mayonnaise in recipes. These lower calorie options can be substituted in dishes for their higher fat/calorie counterparts without losing the great taste you're used to!

**#4 Eat 3 squares a day** – Skipping meals can make you ravenous by mid-morning or mid afternoon & then you'll over eat. Reduce temptation by being sure to get in your 3 meals each day.

**#5 Turn off the tube!** Cut back your family's TV time by taking a walk every evening. Visit different neighborhoods each night to see the decorations and holiday lights.

**#6 Give the gift of time**—Do you bake holiday treats as gifts for friends & family? Rather than that plate of fudge, give your family an IOU for nonfood activities they enjoy. Give grandma an IOU for an afternoon where she chooses what you'll do together or your parents an IOU for snow shoveling or several car washes.

**#7 Dance!** Turn on your favorite holiday music and dance or exercise to it.

**#8 Play games!** After your holiday meal go outside for a treasure hunt, a game of Frisbee, catch or football rather than plunking down in front of the TV.

**#9 Shrink those treats!** Reduce the size of your holiday cookies—this cuts the calories while letting your family still enjoy their favorites. When you make your cookies smaller, don't forget to reduce the baking time as well!

**#10 Rethink your drink!** Liquid calories can pack a big punch & often we forget that! Limit your glasses of eggnog, holiday punch or hot cocoa made with whole milk & quench your thirst instead with diet or low calorie beverages. Make ice cubes with fruit juice & add them to sparkling water for a refreshing low calorie drink. Make your cocoa with skim milk or try a mocha by mixing instant hot cocoa with a cup of coffee.

**#11 Bake before tasting!** Be sure to bake your cookies before snacking on them! Food safety experts advise us to not eat uncooked batters made with raw eggs because raw eggs can contain salmonella—a bacteria that can cause food poisoning. Baking cookies, cakes & breads kills the salmonella bacteria.

**#12 Resolve to eat healthier and be active in the new year!** This year resolve to make one improvement in your family's eating habits and resolve to be active everyday. Start a neighborhood or family daily walking group as a motivator! Your activity buddies will keep you moving on those days you'd rather not.

For more information about healthy eating and active living visit our web site at [www.childhoodobesitycoalition.org](http://www.childhoodobesitycoalition.org)

## *2008 Coulee Region Walk to School Challenge*

October 20-24, 2008

Noted author Henry David Thoreau once said, "An early morning walk is a blessing for the whole day." During the third week of October 20<sup>th</sup> -24<sup>th</sup>, students at 9 Elementary Schools in La Crosse, Onalaska, Holmen and West Salem are being challenged to follow Thoreau's advice and start their day with an early morning walk or bike to/at school to celebrate International Walk to School month.

This second annual *Coulee Region Walk to School Challenge* is being sponsored by the Coulee Region Childhood Obesity Coalition. Our goal is to activate area kids' lifestyles by encouraging them to regularly walk or bike to or at school.

Why encourage your kids to do this? Children walking and biking to school are more apt to be physically fit and less prone to be overweight. They also learn how to handle traffic safely and they contribute to a cleaner environment and improved air quality by reducing traffic volume near their school.

So if you know a child who attends one of the nine participating schools (Franklin, State Road, Emerson, Irving Pertzsch, Northern Hills, West Salem, Evergreen, Sandlake and Viking), have them join the *Coulee Region Walk to School Challenge* by encouraging them to walk or bike to or at school during the Challenge week. For every day children walk or bike to school the week of October 20<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup>, their name will be placed in a drawing at their school for a new scooter and helmet. Nine (9) scooters and helmets will be awarded to prize winners...one for each school. The more days they walk or bike, the more chances they have to win!

In addition, the school with the highest proportion of walkers/bikers will win the coveted "Golden Shoe" award; a traveling trophy for the school whose students lead the way with their active lifestyles!

To enter the Challenge and be eligible for the drawing children must complete and turn in the challenge log available through their school's office. Logs must be turned in by 8:30 AM Friday, October 24<sup>th</sup> to be included in the drawing. Children must attend one of the participating schools to be included in the Challenge and the drawing.

For more information about healthy eating and activity visit the Coalition's web site at [www.childhoodobesitycoalition.org](http://www.childhoodobesitycoalition.org)

Go Green this School Year  
Encourage Your Kids to Walk or Bike to School!

August 2008

With interest in “going green” increasing and the start of school right around the corner, Coulee Region Childhood Obesity Coalition members are encouraging area children to start their school year off on the “right foot” by committing to walking or biking to school rather than being driven this school year. Walking or biking to school is an easy way to get in the 60 minutes of physical activity experts recommend kids get each day and benefits the community's environment as well.

Children walking & biking to school help our community's environment by...

- Reducing traffic congestion around schools and roadways in general.
- Reducing the numbers of cars on the road.
- Reducing air pollution.
- Enhancing our sense of community & our feelings of safety. (With more people out and about there are more “eyes” on the streets making it safer for everyone to walk.)

The Centers for Disease Control notes that 20-25% of the morning traffic during the school year is parents driving kids to school. If more children walked, we could reduce road congestion and its accompanying air quality and community impact considerably

Children walking & biking to school help their school by...

- Reducing school transportation costs.
- Reducing congestion around the school thereby reducing accidents around the school and increasing student safety

Children walking & biking to school help themselves by...

- Helping them learn good safety habits. When children ride everywhere they don't learn or get to practice safe walking/biking habits—habits that will last their lifetime.
- Enhancing their academic performance. When children are active in the morning they arrive at school more awake and ready to learn.
- Providing children with the opportunity to spend time with other children—improving social skills.

- Helping them learn about their neighborhood, make new friends and develop a feeling of belonging. They also learn to be more independent.
- Helping to play a part in assuring their family's financial health by helping to decrease family fuel costs.

So if families are interested in protecting our community's environment while encouraging kids to develop healthy habits, Coalition members urge them to encourage their children to make walking to and from school part of their daily routine. To walk safely, parents and schools need to encourage children to—walk with a buddy, cross only at marked crosswalks or where there are crossing guards, avoid talking with strangers and dress for the weather!

If walking or biking everyday seems too big of a commitment at first—parents and schools can encourage children to commit to walking 1 day each week to start with. Try making every Tuesday a *Treking Tuesday* or every Wednesday a *Walking or Wheeling Wednesday*. Kids will look and feel better as a result!

## This Summer put your Family on the Road to Healthy Bones

June 2008

Bone health is a key nutrition issue for kids. Throughout childhood and into early adulthood our health habits help to build our bones & then as adults our health habits help to maintain them. What can we do to help our children build healthy bones so they enter adulthood with bones as strong as they can be?

1. **Encourage them to eat plenty of high calcium foods everyday!** Be sure to include dairy products such as low fat milk, cheese, yogurt or cottage cheese everyday. Also include other great sources of calcium such as foods calcium fortified orange juice & soy milk, almonds & dark green leafy veggies such as spinach.
2. **Watch the soda!** Drinking soft drinks can disrupt the calcium & phosphorous balance in our bodies over time & reduce the minerals in our bones. Make pop a treat rather than a regular beverage in your house!
3. **Be sure they get their Vitamin D!** Recommendations regarding Vitamin D are changing. Experts now believe both children & adults need more Vitamin D than we originally thought...between 800-1000 IU/day. Food isn't a great source...milk contains about 100 IU as does fortified orange juice...tuna about 200 IU/serving and 3 ½ oz of canned salmon has 360 IU. The sun has been our main source of Vitamin D, but sun screen blocks our skin's absorption of it. While it is still recommended that you apply sunscreen before going out in the sun, experts are now recommending short periods (10-15 min) in the sun without sunscreen 3 times/week or the use of vitamin D supplements. Check with your doctor before taking a supplement.
4. **Move it or lose it!** Weight bearing activity (i.e. walking, running, dancing, strength training, roller blading—any activity that involves gravity & impact on bones) helps build bone mass & strength in children. It also helps maintain bone density in adults. Experts recommend 60 minutes of activity each day for good health and healthy bones.

5. **Be a nonsmoker!** Some studies suggest that smoking increases the risk of fracture & hampers the work of bone building cells. At least one study has suggested that exposure to second-hand smoke during childhood and early adulthood may increase the risk of developing low bone mass.
6. **Use salt & caffeine in moderation!** A high intake of either can promote calcium loss from the body especially if calcium intake is low
7. **Maintain a healthy body weight!** Being underweight is a risk for poor bone health. Young women especially are at risk because being underweight affects their hormone levels (estrogen) causing their bones to lose mass & weaken.

## Help your Kids Strike the Right Nutritional Balance on their Plates

March 2008

Do you remember when you learned to ride a bike? The most important thing was getting the balance right. Once you could balance easily, the pedals could turn smoothly to drive the wheels and get the bike moving. The same thing is true when it comes to choosing our food. Once we learn to carefully balance the amounts and types of foods we eat, all organs in our body will function smoothly and the body will work efficiently. Rate your plate to see if you've got the balance right!

1. Everyday I have:
  - 1 piece of fruit (2)
  - Only fruit juice (1)
  - 2 or more pieces of fruit (3)
2. At breakfast I have:
  - Toast with peanut butter & jelly (2)
  - Nothing at all (0)
  - Cereal with fruit & milk (3)
3. I eat fast food (burgers, pizza, tacos & fried chicken)
  - Once a week or less (3)
  - Every day (0)
4. Each day I eat:
  - Whole grains such as cereal, brown rice & wheat bread (2)
  - No grains (0)
  - Primarily processed grains such as white bread, white rice & sugared cereals
5. Everyday I eat:
  - Raw or cooked vegetables 2-3 times/day
  - Only french fries (0)
  - 1 vegetable/day (1)

6. If I have a sandwich the filling is usually:
  - A thick layer of butter or jam/jelly (0)
  - Tuna, lean meat or chopped veggies (3)
  - A thick slice of cheese (1)
  
7. After school my favorite snack is:
  - Fruit (3)
  - Bread or toast (2)
  - Cookies or candy (0)
  
8. Everyday you drink:
  - 2-3 glasses of milk (3)
  - Mostly pop or sweetened drinks (0)
  - A wide variety of healthy drinks (3)
  
9. How often do you have sugared drinks or add sugar to food?
  - Once a day (1)
  - Never (3)
  - Frequently through out the day (0)
  
10. I eat candy & cakes:
  - Never (3)
  - Occasionally (2)
  - Everyday (0)

**How did your plate rate??**

- 22-30**            You're looking good! You're making good choices that will help you build healthy habits & a healthy body.
- 13-21**            A good effort but there's room to improve! Think about how you can eat healthier.
- Less than 13**      Your plate is out of balance. Think about how you can improve!

**Fearless Friday Promotes Body Confidence for Youth at School and Home**

February 2008

LaCrosse, WI — During Eating Disorder Awareness Week Gundersen Lutheran's Eating Disorder Program recognizes February 29 as Fearless Friday, a day designated to go without dieting especially for our youth. Instead of dieting, Fearless Friday organizers recommend that you treat yourself with respect by listening to your body's signs of hunger and fullness, eating a balanced variety of foods,

avoiding the categorization of food as good vs. bad, and finding and participating in an enjoyable physical activity.

Parents and schools play a significant role in the formation of body image and self esteem. Creating an environment where children of all sizes are equally valued and feel supported, comfortable and confident can have remarkable impact on self-esteem. However dieting and calorie counting are currently an epidemic in our culture, thus disordered eating has become a public health issue that demands the attention of parents, health providers, and school personnel. Living in a climate that glorifies thinness and devalues overweight children has wreaked havoc on our children's self-esteem and body image, and created an environment that encourages children and adolescents to engage in unhealthy weight altering activities. Consider these statistics from The National Eating Disorders Association and The Eating Disorder Journal of Treatment and Prevention:

- 42% of 6 to 9-year-old girls report a desire to be thinner.
- 50% of girls between the ages of 12 and 14 are unhappy because they "feel fat".
- 80% of women in the U.S. are dissatisfied with their appearance.
- 324% greater risk occurs for obesity in those adolescent girls who go on a diet compared to those who do not.

In addition to the negative health consequences, dieting and disordered eating also affects learning outcomes for students. Preoccupation with food results in irritability, decreased concentration, and isolation according to eating disorder experts.

To prevent disordered eating, children need positive role models in their lives. The following are things you can do to help promote healthy body image in children:

1. Learn how to model healthy eating and a positive body image.
  - Try not to classify foods as "good" or "bad".
  - Discourage dieting or weight-loss fads.
  - Listen to hunger and fullness cues.
2. Recognize people for who they are and what they do, not for what they look like or how they appear.
3. Focus on internal attributes and strengths vs. physical appearance.
4. Educate yourself on normal growth and development:
  - Approximately 20% of our adult height and 50% of our adult weight is gained between 11-19 years of age.
  - Everyone grows at a different rate, so try not to compare children's growth rate to others.
5. Remember, a lot about size and appearance is based on genetics.
6. Commit to helping children, both male and female, understand the ways in which television, magazines, and other media distort the true diversity of human body types and imply that thinness is the only way to succeed.
7. Encourage your children to be active and appreciate what their bodies can do. Help them enjoy the "good feeling" of being active. Make exercise fun and positive.

## Healthy Weight Week January 20-26, 2008

### A Time to Celebrate Healthy Lifestyles

This time of year we seem preoccupied with dieting and losing our holiday weight gain. Unfortunately our healthy eating resolutions often don't last long or we try to lose the weight quickly by following less than healthy eating plans. While the weight comes off, it often goes right back on once we return to old habits.

Healthy Weight Week is designed to remind people of the nondiet lifestyle—a lifestyle that focuses on healthy eating choices and an active lifestyle. According to the Network's Director, Frances Berg, the week is designed to shift our focus to health and wellness rather than diets, pills and potions.

How can each of us celebrate Healthy Weight Week? We can...

1. Stop dieting and focus instead on eating healthier. Check out [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov) for your own personalized eating plan. Just enter your age, gender and activity level and the site will give you your own personalized food guide pyramid to follow!
2. Rediscover normal eating. Listen to your body's signals of hunger and fullness. When you do, you'll eat when you're hungry and stop when you're full. You'll also notice how much better you feel!
3. Activate your lifestyle. Find ways to move throughout the day—walk to see an office colleague rather than sending an email, carve out 15 minutes during your work day to take a walk or decide as a family to be active together in the evening. However you choose to be active, focus on the pleasure of movement and its health and energy benefits, rather than the calories you are burning. If you haven't been very active lately, work up to it. If you overdo it, you won't continue. Find a comfortable level of activity you enjoy and keep it up all year.
4. Reduce your stress! Use relaxation techniques, or simply empty your mind and let your body go limp. Try taking 30-second relaxation breaks throughout the day to rejuvenate yourself.
5. Focus on the positive rather than the negative. Try to end your day by thinking of at least one positive thing that happened to you that day and telling a family member or friend about it. When we focus on the positive rather than the negative we lift our spirits and feel better about ourselves.
6. Remember that health, beauty and strength come in all sizes. Respect people of all sizes and appreciate their diversity. Size prejudice creates problems—it doesn't solve them

And above all...Eat well, live actively and feel good about yourself and others! For more information about Healthy Weight Week go to [www.healthyweight.net](http://www.healthyweight.net).

