

In the News update

The Best New Year's Resolution for 2009— Resolve to make your home a healthy one!

January 2009

As the New Year begins, resolve as a family to improve your home environment and jump start your New Year's resolutions to maintain healthier habits in 2009. What does your family's home environment have to do with healthy habits? Plenty! If your home has a refrigerator stocked with colorful fruits and veggies, whole grains and minimally processed foods you have a better change of eating a healthy diet. If you have multiple TVs and computers turned on frequently in your home, including during meal time, few active toys such as balls, Frisbees or bikes for your kids to play with and rarely are able to set aside time to be active as a family your family may not be getting the 60 minutes of physical activity you all need for good health.

See how healthy your home is by doing the home assessment below adapted from a home environment assessment from www.HealthyFamilyHome.org. Do the assessment then discuss the results as a family. What can you do together to improve your family's home environment score in the New Year??

Healthy Family Home Assessment

1. Open your refrigerator and as fast as you can, count the different types of fruits and vegetables it contains. Give yourself 1 point for each one you find. Repeat this exercise in your cupboards. Give yourself 1 point for each can or package of fruits and vegetables. Include fresh, frozen, canned or dried varieties in your tally.
2. As fast as you can, find a ball, Frisbee or other item that can be tossed around outside for a game of catch. Give yourself 2 points if the item is found in under 2 minutes, 1 point if found in 2-5 minutes.
3. Are there stairs in your home or apartment building? At your workplace or school? Does everyone in the family walk them daily? If so, give yourself 1 point for each person who takes the stairs each day.
4. Are family members physically active most days? For each family member who got in their 60 minutes of activity in the last 2 days, give yourself 1 point.
5. Over the past week, did you eat together as a family? Give yourself 1 point for each family meal your family has shared this past week.
6. Check out the number of televisions and computers in your home. Give yourself 1 point for each TV or computer that is currently turned off.
7. Grab 7 of your most frequently eaten food items out of your cabinets and bring them to the table. Check out the food labels on each item. How many have sugar or high fructose corn syrup listed as one of the first 4 ingredients. Subtract 1 point for each item that does. How many of the items have whole grain listed as an ingredient? Add 1 point for each one that does.

Tally up your family's total points. The more points you have, the healthier your home environment is. Look at your assessment results.

- What stands out?
- How have you made your home environment healthy?
- What could your family change to make it healthier?
- What will your family resolve to do in 2009 to improve your home environment to make it easier for each family member to make healthy choices??

Coulee Region Childhood Obesity Coalition Receives Funding for Footsteps to Health Project

February 2009

The Coulee Region Childhood Obesity Coalition has received a \$20,000 grant from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services Nutrition and Physical Activity Program for their *Footsteps to Health Project*. This grant is one of 16 that have been awarded to community coalitions throughout the state. The grants range from \$5,213 to \$30,000 for a total amount of \$232,076.

“These grants are good news for communities as they struggle with the consequences of obesity and related chronic diseases” said Dr. Seth Foldy, Division of Public Health Administration and State Health Officer. “The grants will mobilize communities to create healthy environments that make it easier for residents to eat healthfully, be physically active and achieve a healthy weight.”

The *Footsteps to Health Project* will focus on increasing fruit and vegetable consumption among adults and children in the Coulee Region. Parents are the gatekeepers of what children consume in the home as they generally purchase and prepare the food their family eats. To improve children's fruit and vegetable consumption the Coalition hopes to influence the purchasing and food preparation habits of families shopping at 3 area Festival Foods grocery stores through in store activities such as tastings, food preparation demos and recipe distribution as well as increasing fruit and vegetable options available at the deli and grab and go counters. Grant activities will begin in July 2009.

Why increase fruit and vegetable consumption? Research tells us that 63.5% of La Crosse County adults are either overweight or obese as are approximately one third of children under 18. In addition, Population Health Institute data shows that 76 % of La Crosse County adults consume less than the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables needed for good health. Fruit and vegetable consumption has long been linked to healthy weight.

Footsteps to Health Project partners include the 3 Festival Foods stores in the Coulee Region, Viterbo University and Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center. Viterbo students will work with Coalition members to assist with in store customer education and the development of healthy deli/grab and go recipes. Gundersen Lutheran's 500 Club dietitians will work with Coalition members and Festival Foods deli staff to identify Festival Foods deli offerings (or develop new ones) that provide ½ cup of fruits/vegetables per serving while meeting the 500 Club program criteria.

Healthy Habits Build Healthy Smiles

March 2009

Late winter is a perfect time to take stock of your children's dental health! February was Children's Dental Health Month and March is National Nutrition Month—both observances help us focus on keeping our children's teeth in top shape.

Why is children's dental health important?

- Kids feel better about themselves and have better self esteem when their teeth are healthy and their smile is attractive.
- Children's ability to eat well is very much influenced by the health of their teeth. Imagine trying to bite into an apple or eat corn on the cob if your front teeth are missing.
- Teeth also affect our ability to communicate. Missing teeth can impact our ability to speak and speak clearly. If children can't be understood in the classroom they won't do as well in school and if they can't be understood by classmates, their social interactions can be affected.
- Poor oral health can affect a child's ability to learn. Untreated tooth decay leads to pain and when kids go to school in pain, they get distracted from their schoolwork. In fact, according to a Washington State oral health report, more than 51 million hours of school time is lost each year in the U.S. because of dental-related issues

How then can you keep your children's teeth healthy?

Sugar is generally viewed as a common cause of tooth decay but avoiding high sugar foods is not the only thing we can do to protect children's teeth. Check out the suggestions below to increase your child's chances of having a bright smile!

- While limiting or eliminating sugary foods such as candy and cookies and sugary drinks such as pop and sports drinks isn't the only way to protect your child's teeth---it is terrifically important! Sugary foods set up an environment in the child's mouth that allows bacteria to grow which promotes tooth decay. Sugary drinks such as pop and sports drinks add a second problem as the acid they contain damages the child's tooth enamel.
- If your child does eat or drink high sugar foods or drinks, have them consume them as part of a meal. When these foods are eaten alone, the child's mouth doesn't produce enough saliva to wash away the sugar or acid the food/drink contains. This is especially true if the child eats or drinks high sugar foods or drinks right before bed and doesn't brush before going to bed.
- When your child snacks, choose "tooth-friendly" foods such as cheese, raw veggies and dip or yogurt. These foods help build teeth and strengthen tooth enamel.
- Encourage your children to brush their teeth twice (2x) each day (after breakfast and before bed) with fluoride toothpaste and to brush after eating when possible. Have them use a soft bristled brush as hard and medium bristle brushes can damage teeth and gums. If your children can't brush after eating, encourage them to rinse their mouths with water or mouthwash or chew sugarless gum.
- Teach your child to floss daily. Brushing and flossing break up the sugar and bacteria that can harm your child's teeth

- Drink water...from the tap! Bottled water often doesn't have fluoride in it like tap water does. Onalaska, West Salem and La Crosse have fluoridated water supplies and Holmen will have it soon.
- Finish your meal with a drink of water. By doing this your children are washing their teeth!
- When possible, choose medicines and cough drops that are sugar free.
- Encourage your child to be smoke-free. Smoking or using smokeless tobacco stains teeth, causes bad breath and can damage gum tissue.

Follow these simple guidelines to keep your child's smile healthy and bright!

Healthy Fair & Local Festival Fare

15 Ways to Eat Healthy & Be Active at Area Fairs & Festivals

July 2009

Whether it's the County or State fair or one of our many area festivals it's hard to not be tempted by the many foods that seem to surround you! This can be challenging for anyone interested in health and fitness since fair food is often thought to be far from healthy fare!

So how do you navigate area fairs and festivals with health and wellness in mind? First, ask yourself, "Am I really hungry?" before making that purchase or am I just tempted by all the smells & choices. Next...

1. **Think grilled vs. deep fried.** Try kebabs, tacos, a grilled burger or a turkey tenderloin vs. the giant turkey leg, corndog or the fried sausage/onion/pepper sandwich on a super sized bun.
2. **Think the 5 food groups!** A healthy diet is composed of 5 basic food groups...fruits, veggies, dairy, protein foods like meat & grains. In general, fair food that contains grilled meats, veggies or fruit will make for healthier choices. When choosing your meal at area fairs & festivals aim to include 4-5 of the basic food groups. Some healthy ideas... Plain chicken or pork sandwiches, regular sized burgers, a baked pretzel, plain or caramel apples, frozen bananas, tacos, smoothies, corn on the cob, baked potatoes and low fat milks.
3. **Sweet tooth calling you?** Try a cup of ice cream or a single dip sugar cone instead of the funnel cake, mini donuts or deep fried candy bar.
4. **Have it your way!** One advantage to fair food is that it's often made right in front of you. If you don't want sugar in your fruit smoothie or sauce on your burger, request it that way. Choose foods where you can control the toppings. That way you can say yea or nay to what goes on your selection.
5. **Drink plenty of water.** Keep yourself hydrated on those hot summer days and reach for that bottle of water rather than pop or other high sugar beverages. If water isn't available, try lemonade!

6. **Pick one thing.** If you just have to have something that may not be the healthiest choice, then pick just one of your favorites and enjoy it.
7. **Share food with friends.** Splitting treats with friends is an age old tactic that allows you to enjoy fair food without breaking your calorie bank. Besides...enjoying our area fairs & festivals with friends adds to the fun.
8. **Pay attention to portions.** If you are able to, just have smaller portions of your favorites. Share with a friend or eat a reasonable portion and either take the rest home (if you'll be going home soon or can keep it cold until you do) or throw the rest away. Sometimes your waist is more important than what you waste.
9. **Have a healthy breakfast before going.** If you go to the fair or festival early in the day you'll avoid the crowds, its cooler, and because you're somewhat full you may not be as tempted to overeat.
10. **Those feet are made for walking.** One great thing about fairs and festivals is that exercise is naturally built into them. You walk around looking at the exhibits, walk to the rides or walk over to see the music... it's easy to get in a mile or two during the day. Our bodies were built to move. An active lifestyle is healthy for us in so many ways...both physically & mentally. So strap on those shoes & get moving!
11. **Go for the active rides!** There are so many rides and activities to choose from at fairs now – try rock climbing, the big blow up obstacle races and if you're feeling really adventuresome...bungee jumping!
12. **Walk or bike to the Festival!** Instead of driving and dealing with traffic congestion and high priced parking, walk or bike to the fair or festival as a family instead. If you live farther away drive in and park a distance from the festival and then walk the rest of the way.
13. **Everybody loves to dance!** There is always music and many types of it at fairs and festivals. Take advantage and bring the whole family to dance!
14. **Play as a family together!** Take advantage of the family being together and bring a Frisbee or ball to play while walking to the festival or to play at the park.
15. **Volunteer** to help behind the scenes! Help with set-up or take down of the festival and find out how much extra activity you get in!

Most of all have fun! When you consider all the neat stuff to do at area fairs and festivals, food doesn't have to be the focus!

5 Ways to Make Your Vacation Healthier

August 2009

Have you ever returned from vacation to find the pants you've left in your closet seemed to have shrunk? You're not alone! To prevent those vacation pounds from creeping on you, Coulee Region Childhood Obesity Coalition members have chosen 5 practical tips to help you and your family maintain your healthy habits during your summer road trips.

1. **Pack healthy snacks...** Be sure to keep healthy snacks on hand when traveling. The best combinations are those that contain some protein and fiber to keep you feeling full longer. Carry unsalted nuts, fruit or whole grain crackers in single serving packages to cure your snack cravings.
2. **Drop out of the Clean Plate Club...** Eating out often means big portions, more calories than you're used to & dessert. Just because all that food is in front of you, doesn't mean you have to eat it! It's OK to only eat half of your entrée! If leaving food bothers you, share an entrée or dessert with a family member. That way, you get to taste some of the specialties of where you are at without busting your calorie bank!
3. **Your shoes are made for walking** ...Too often on vacation our exercise routines are put on hold. Strap on your walking shoes and get going! Wear a pedometer during the day to see just how many steps you're really taking. Ask the hotel staff about safe walking routes near where you're staying. It's a great way to see an area and helps burn off some of those extra calories!
4. **Rethink your drinks...**The morning lattes, 24 ounce bottles of pop to cool your thirst and margaritas before dinner can add up. Research shows the calories we sip substantially contribute to weight problems. So rethink your drinks and choose wisely. Carry a water bottle during the day, skip the whip on your latte and have it made with fat free milk rather than whole and choose a glass of beer or wine (just 1!) rather than higher calorie mixed drinks.
5. **Enjoy regional specialties!...** You are on vacation...so enjoy yourself in moderation. Stop and consider the choices you make. Pralines in New Orleans and key lime pie in the Florida Keys are regional specialties to savor, however the candy or chips from the hotel mini bar or vending machine tastes the same as they do back home. Be selective and indulge wisely!!!