

In the News update 1/6/10

## *Walk Safely to School this Fall*

August 2009

School starts in a few short weeks and Coulee Region Childhood Obesity Coalition members encourage all children to start the school year off on the right foot and commit to walking to school this fall rather than riding in a car. Walking to school is an easy way to get in the recommended 30-60 minutes of physical activity each day and has lots of other benefits as well. Walking to school...

- Helps reduce road congestion around schools & on the roadways in general. 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 improve air quality considerably!
- Can enhance academic performance. When children are active in the morning they arrive at school more awake and ready to learn.
- Can help create safer communities. With more people out and about, more eyes are on the streets.
- Enables kids to get to know their neighborhood and develop a feeling of belonging.
- Teaches children good safety habits. When children ride everywhere they don't learn or get to practice safe walking habits—habits that will last their lifetime.

So encourage your child to make walking to and from school this year part of their daily routine. Help them select a walking route that you feel will get them to school safely. Practice walking the route before school starts this fall so both you and your child are comfortable it. To walk safely, encourage children to—

- walk with a buddy
- cross only at marked crosswalks or where there are crossing guards
- look left, right and left again before crossing streets
- refrain from pushing, shoving or chasing each other when near the street
- avoid hitchhiking or taking rides from people they don't know
- talk with parents or teachers about bullying that happens on walks to or from school
- wear bright clothing or reflective gear so they'll be visible

Walking is a fun, healthy way for kids to travel to school. It'll teach them social and safety skills they'll use throughout their lives. For more information about healthy eating and active lifestyles visit the Coulee Region Childhood Obesity Coalition's web site at

[www.childhoodobesity.org](http://www.childhoodobesity.org)

## *7 Ways to Have a Happy, Healthy Halloween*

October 2009

For kids, Halloween is often eagerly anticipated. It's a chance to dress up in an often scary disguise and an opportunity to eat lots of treats your parents often limit! But Halloween doesn't

*Eat Healthy, Be Active*

have to make the health conscious parent cringe. Follow these 5 tips from Coulee Region Childhood Obesity Coalition members to have a happy but healthier Halloween...

1. **Consider downsizing:** Start by having the bags your children use fit their size. Nix the shopping bags, plastic trash bags & pillow cases. Instead use a small bag or container that your child can easily carry. This goes a long way toward reducing the “loot” that your kids will bring home!
2. **Set Boundaries:** As much as your kids would like to polish off all the treats they bring home, consider setting limits on how much of the candy they’ll keep, how many pieces of what they keep they can eat each day & how long the family will keep the candy around the house.
3. **Fill them up:** If kids are hungry when they leave to go trick or treating they are more likely to snack on their treats as they go. So have a healthy meal or snack before leaving the house so you and the kids aren’t as tempted.
4. **Try nonedible options:** Instead of distributing candy on Halloween get creative & try a nonedible alternative. Consider temporary tattoos, stickers or small novelties (take a look at Oriental Trading Company’s catalogue at [www.orientaltrading.com](http://www.orientaltrading.com) for ideas)
5. **Get in the mood:** Offer fun healthy ghoulish treats, i.e. dip for pretzels can be scooped with mini scoop and place an olive in the middle look like an eye. Red food coloring can create a bloody eye.
6. **Have fun with pumpkins:** Buy one for each family member & have a carving or decorating contest then decorate your front yard or house with the results! Buy small pumpkins, roast them & their seeds and then make pumpkin pie, muffins or pancakes with your handiwork. Offer fun healthy ghoulish treats, i.e. dip for pretzels can be scooped with mini scoop and place an olive in the middle look like an eye. Red food coloring can create a bloody eye.
7. **Brush up:** With all the sugar around the house Halloween is a perfect time to reinforce brushing habits. Encourage your kids at a minimum to brush when they get up in the morning & before bed. It won’t hurt to brush after sampling their “loot” either!

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

## 5 Ways to Lighten Up Your Holidays

December 2009

Who says holiday weight gain is a given?? Try a zero weight gain campaign this holiday season by following these 5 tips from Coulee Region Childhood Obesity Coalition members...

1. **Reserve calories:** Are you invited to a holiday party this evening? Save those extra

calories for later by having a lighter lunch &/or breakfast. Pack your earlier meals with fruits, veggies and whole grains. They often have fewer calories but still fill you up. The last thing you want to do is arrive at the party hungry as then you may stick too close to the buffet table & over eat.

2. **Be Active:** The holidays are not the time of year to skip your exercise regime! Not only will being active burn those extra calories you're taking in but it will also help reduce holiday stress.
3. **Size does matter:** If you plan on enjoying those holiday sweets, keep portions in mind. Sample the holiday sweets rather than filling your plate with them. Be picky and reserve your calories for something you can't have other times of year.
4. **Talk more, eat less:** Holidays are about reconnecting with friends and family. Avoid camping out at the buffet table & circulate!!!
5. **Think your drink:** Some holiday drinks, like egg nog, can pack a big calorie punch. Alcohol can also lower your inhibitions so your best intentions go out the window. Limit your alcohol consumption especially if you're driving. When you do partake, opt instead for lower calorie options such as wine spritzers made with wine and sparkling water

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## Give the Gift of Health this Holiday Season

December 2009

With 1 in 3 children overweight, parents and caregivers are looking for ways to encourage their children to be physically active. If you share these concerns, give a gift this season that promotes health by giving the children on your list a gift that keeps them moving. Need ideas?

### For the infants on your list

Help them develop both their large and small muscles along with hand-eye coordination by offering toys that encourage them to reach, grab, crawl, pull up and eventually walk. Good bets...

- Mobiles that hang over the crib that infants can reach for, bat at and listen to.
- Activity mats and centers that encourage baby to crawl pull themselves up and walk holding on.
- Stacking toys
- Large balls and toys that roll, encouraging baby to follow

### For the toddler on your list

One and two year old children are on the move. Give gifts that will help them develop their coordination and gross motor skills to get them crawling, pulling up, walking and moving. Good bets...

- Large blocks to build structures such as forts and palaces.
- Push and pull toys your youngster can walk with.

- Ride on animals, trucks and cars that they need to peddle to ride.
- Music to dance to.

#### For the preschooler on your list

Three, four and five year old children are more coordinated than their younger counterparts. To continue to help them develop their coordination and gross motor skills consider...

- A small basketball hoop with a matching size ball
- Tricycles and other 3 wheel bikes
- Large blocks for building
- Baseball tee with a bat
- Music to dance to
- Small slides, swings, play houses and sandboxes for outdoor play
- Clothes to play dress up & make believe

#### For the 5-9 year old children on your list

After a day at school, they need to burn off some of their excess energy. Consider...

- Jump ropes
- Balls (football, big balls, hop-balls, volleyballs or soccer balls)
- Music to dance to along with their own DVD player
- Bicycle (and don't forget the helmet!)
- Scooter or skateboard
- In line skates or ice skates
- A sled
- Active indoor games such as Twister or Twister Hopscotch
- Active backyard games such as ring toss or swing sets

#### For the 9-14 year old children on your list

Kids between these ages are starting to enjoy team sports and activities. They are also starting to develop hobbies or strong interests of their own. Consider...

- Inline or ice skates, bicycles or skateboards. Buy reflective stickers, clothing and bike reflectors for older kids who may be out after dark and include, as part of your gift, a helmet, elbow pads, wrist guards and knee pads when giving in line skates or skateboards.
- Equipment for their favorite sport—balls, mitts, racquets
- Introductory lessons for something that interests your child. This may be a gift certificate for several months of karate, dance, gymnastics, tennis or skating
- Music to dance to. Teach each other a dance from “your generation”. Parents can teach their children a dance they learned when they were growing up and kids can teach their parents a dance they currently enjoy.

Best of all, whatever your child's age, give them the gift of your time. Children love to have their parents to themselves. Plan a time for just the two of you to do something together. Take a hike together, go skating or take a class together. It'll be a special gift that you'll both remember for years to come!