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June 2007

Dear Colleagues:

Welcome to the 6th issue of our 2007 campaign on ***Eating Together, Playing Together***. This issue focuses on **healthy summertime fun for happy kids**. Our fitness handout is about **active play** from the backyard to the rest stop, while our nutrition handout covers **cooking with kids**.

As concerns have mounted about the weight, fitness levels, and nutrient intake of American children, much attention has been focused on the role of schools. While it is vital to improve school meals, vending options, and PE classes, an article in the April 2007 *American Journal of Public Health* reminds us that homes play critical roles as well. **The Effect of School on Overweight in Childhood: Gain in Body Mass Index During the School Year and During Summer Vacation** (Hippel, et al, Vol 97, No. 4, 696-702) found that growth in BMI was typically faster and more variable during summer vacation than during the kindergarten and first-grade school years. The differences between school and summer gains were especially large for kindergarteners who were already overweight.

Families with children of all ages need information and support to make positive food and fitness choices throughout the year. Fortunately, more and more programs are meeting these needs at the local level – and online. YMCAs across the US and in Montana are participating in **Activate America** (www.ymca.net/activateamerica/), focused on families who want to lead a healthy lifestyle, but struggle to do so. **America on the Move** (<http://aom.americaonthemove.org/>) has online ideas for kids and families. **We Can! (Ways to Enhance Children's Activity and Nutrition)** www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/ offers tips and suggestions for both families and communities who want to help children achieve a healthy weight.

Healthy Families packets are made possible with the generous support of agencies, organizations, and individuals. Please join us in thanking the 2007 sponsors listed on the left. This month, we would like to specially recognize and thank our most recent sponsor, the Montana pediatricians who are members of the **Montana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics**. If you utilize this information and can make a donation to support positive, practical messages for families, please contact ERM Chair Katie Bark at 406-994-5641 or kbark@mt.gov

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Physical Activity

Five Easy Ways to Enjoy Active Summertime Fun

Like many adults, children do not like exercise – but they love to play. The key to fit, healthy kids is to make family time activity time. By making plans for some active fun every day, you can improve everyone's fitness levels – and often improve their attitudes too!

★ Make plans for active fun – in the yard.

Active fun is as close as your own yard. It's as easy as a basketball hoop, a Frisbee™, or a sprinkler for splashing on a hot summer day. Instead of sending the kids out to play by themselves, go out with them and enjoy old-fashioned fun, like freeze tag, hide-and-seek, kick the can, horseshoes, or badminton.

★ Make plans for active fun – in the neighborhood.

Look for active adventures around the corner. Plan a scavenger hunt with other families or set up a bicycle obstacle course with traffic cones. Trade dog walking duties with neighbors: one family in the morning, the other in the evening. Everybody, including the dogs, will feel better, act better, and look better too.

★ Make plans for active fun – at the park.

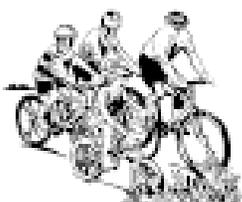
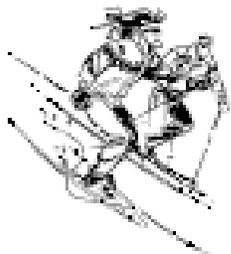
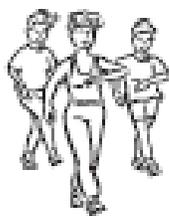
Big Sky country is full of parks, each with its own special activities: city parks with splash pools for tots and Folf (Frisbee™ golf) for adults; county parks with smooth paths for biking and running; state parks with lakes, rivers, and streams for paddling; and national parks and forests for lots of seriously fun hiking.

★ Make plans for active fun – on road trips.

Take a break from sitting in the car and fit some active fun into a long trip. Pack a small bag of 'rest stop toys,' like a Frisbee™, a soccer ball, a couple of mitts and a baseball, or a few Nerf™ toys. A 15-minute break will help everybody be in a better mood – and it might keep the kids from driving the driver crazy!

★ Make plans for active fun – for charity.

Many groups and organizations sponsor walking, running or biking events – some to raise money and others to raise awareness for their cause. Training together as a family for one of these events offers rewards on multiple levels: family time + active fun + a sense of accomplishment + helping others.



EAT RIGHT MONTANA

Healthy Eating

Five Easy Ways to Enjoy Cooking with Kids

Cooking with kids provides the opportunity to teach many things besides food and nutrition skills. Cooking is a wonderful way to teach culture (different people enjoy different foods); real life math (doubling or halving a recipe's ingredients); organization (getting everything ready); and following directions (reading a recipe).

● Get kids involved in planning fun meals or snacks.

Although you may see cooking as a chore, kids see the kitchen as an exciting, even magical, place. Everyone loves to be involved in choosing their favorite dishes for meals and snacks. For small children, eating becomes something special when "I got to pick it out" – and even better when "I made it myself."

● Get kids involved in shopping for new foods.

Food shopping with children works best when they are well rested and not hungry. Use the trip through the aisles to talk about possible meals and different ways to prepare different items. Allow children to choose a new item that appeals to them in the produce department (or at the local farmer's market).

● Get kids involved in kitchen safety.

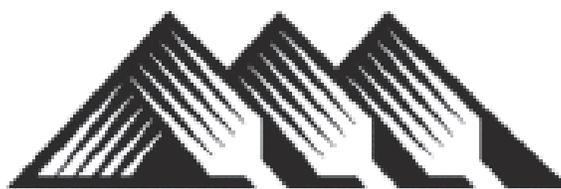
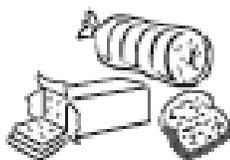
All children need adult supervision in the kitchen. Give frequent reminders about what's OK to touch and which items could be dangerous. Talk about which kitchen tasks are for grown-ups and which are for kids. Establish kitchen rules, such as always washing hands and never touching a hot stove or knives.

● Get kids involved in preparing tasty recipes.

Children can manage different kitchen tasks at different ages. A preschooler can stir ingredients that have been pre-measured; an elementary age child can read the recipe and do the measuring and mixing themselves; tweens can learn to cut and chop safely; and teens can try challenging techniques from a cooking show.

● Get kids involved in setting an appealing table.

Children are justifiably proud when they make even a simple dish, like a fruit salad or sandwich themselves. You can reinforce their success (and desire to try cooking again) by making the table special too. Put their creation on a "fancy" plate, light a small candle, use colored napkins, or put some flowers in a vase.



EAT RIGHT MONTANA



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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EATING TOGETHER, PLAYING TOGETHER
Celebrating Healthy Families 2007

June 1, 2007

Smart Summertime Moves for Happier, Healthier Kids

The lazy days of summer may have a downside for American children. A large study published in the April 2007 *American Journal of Public Health* reported that the average BMI (Body Mass Index) of 5 to 6 year-olds increased more than twice as much during summer months compared with the school year. The increase was even greater among black and Hispanic students and children who were overweight at the start of kindergarten. The researchers speculate that a lack of summertime structure allows many in the tater tot generation – the children of couch potatoes – to play too many video games, watch too much TV, and munch on too many high-calorie snacks.

“Families are incredibly important in helping children be active and fit,” says Karen Sanford-Gall, mother of two young boys and Executive Director of the Big Sky State Games-Big Sky Fit Kids program. “This study indicates the critical role that families play in ensuring that children develop lifelong habits to maintain a healthy weight. Summer in Montana is a perfect time to get the whole family more involved in active outdoor fun and in eating delicious, nutritious meals together.”

Parents, pediatric health experts and celebrity chefs like Rachel Ray agree: One sure-fire way to help kids enjoy healthier food choices is to get them off the couch and into the kitchen, the garden, and the grocery store. Children of all ages love to “play” with their food – and they are proud to help prepare simple meals and snacks. They are also much more likely to eat good-for-them foods when they have helped with the shopping, stirring, and/or serving.

For successful cooking with kids, just keep everything simple and let them know how much you enjoy spending time with them. An age-appropriate cookbook, like *The Good Housekeeping Illustrated Children's Cookbook*, is always a great place to start. Family members can each pick (or make-up) a recipe that sounds good to them and make a shopping list of necessary foods. You can also start with the food, and imagine different ways to prepare it. Local farmer's markets are the ideal place to start a colorful food adventure, with crunchy snap peas or fresh juicy tomatoes.

According to Sanford-Gall, helping children maintain a healthy weight is about balancing smart eating with fun physical activity. “With longer days and warmer weather, Big Sky country becomes one big family playground. You and your children can enjoy serious fun everywhere from the backyard to a state or national park.” Organized team sports, like baseball or soccer, are just one of the ways to keep kids active, fit and happy. Here are three tips for successful summer fun:

- **Plan ways to fit active play into every day.** Camps, lessons, and sport teams are all options. You can also walk the dog, throw a Frisbee™ around the yard, or bike to the park for a picnic.
- **Be sun-safe while you play.** Make sure that everyone wears a hat – and plenty of sunscreen – to prevent sunburn (and keep their skin healthy and youthful).
- **Stay cool with refreshing water.** During the heat of summer, it's especially important for small children to stay hydrated with a glass of cool water at least a couple times an hour.

Past and current issues of Eat Right Montana's monthly packets can be downloaded free at www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrighthealthyfamilies.htm