

Recreation-Helping YOUTH GROW UP HEALTHY

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Quick, a trivia test...

1. What percentage of American youth ages 6 to 19 are “overweight?”
a. 10 % b. 20 % c. 30% ?
2. Now guess what percentage of youth is “obese?”
a. 5 % b. 10 % c. 15% ?
3. How much of the body’s bone density is formed during the teen years?
a. 30% b. 40 % c. 50% ?
4. How many ideas on how to GROW UP HEALTHY are in the article below?
a. 5 , b. 12 , c. a lot!

Get the Info

Youth make food choices that have lasting effects. So where do you look? An excellent guide is the *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines) published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Health and Human Services.

Share the Knowledge

Youth make wise choices that have lasting effects. In high schools where food values were posted in the cafeteria, teens chose foods lower in fat and calories (*Penn State University study*). Calcium, iron and activity should be increased during youth. A diet rich in calcium (at least 1200 mg a day) may reduce the occurrence of broken bones. Weight bearing exercises help increase bone density and metabolic rate (the amount of calories burned).

Make Small Changes = Get Great Results

Small changes have big results. Eliminate one junk food a day and you will greatly reduce calorie consumption each week. Walk an extra five minutes a day (or other short period of exercise) and you will increase your regular exercise by a half hour per week. Both are keys to weight control and general good health. A healthy diet and regular exercise improves the way youth look and feel.

Use “Skill power”

- Stock the frig with fresh produce and fruit. Create a grocery list with your child including healthy foods of his or her choice. Buy snack foods and soda only for specific occasions.
- Keep healthy foods easier to see and easier to reach. Put water in front of the soda.
- Have a “special time” to walk or bike with your child. This is a great way chat about the day’s events while establishing healthy life habits.
- Encourage youth to ride a bike, skates or scooter as opposed to driving. Making them chip in for gas money can help influence the mode of transportation they choose.
- Set a reasonable limit for non-study related activities such as watching TV, playing video games, or sitting at the computer, perhaps an hour a day.
- Talk about what’s easy and what’s hard about choosing healthy habits.

Youth understand that we are not perfect. Youth look to adults for guidance and support. Teens make better food choices when informed and involved in the selection. Combining exercise and a healthy diet will produce positive results in the way your teen will look and feel today.

Healthy habits formed in childhood that are encouraged and supported can last a lifetime.

(Healthy Quiz Answers: According to the Center for Disease Control, over 30% are overweight, over 15% are obese, and 50% of bone density is formed in the teenage years.)