

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2012 NC Cooperative Extension Congressional District 5

Serving Ashe, Forsyth, Surry and Watauga counties



Students Gain Skills that Will Last a Lifetime

Wishing to decrease the spread of infectious disease causing germs at their facility, Watauga County Head Start Program partnered with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service to deliver the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) to their children. The administration knew that along with sharing healthy nutrition and physical activity concepts, EFNEP included information about proper hand washing in each lesson.

As part of its teaching strategy, EFNEP involved the children in hands-on activities. They played games, read books, and sang songs that reinforced the importance of properly washing their hands. EFNEP also provided guided practice activities that taught the children where to scrub and for how long, and Glow Germ lotion brightened by a black light allowed them to see where germs that might be lingering behind if hands were not thoroughly washed with soap and water.

To demonstrate how to wash hands if soap and running water were not available, EFNEP showed the children how to properly use the hand sanitizer found in their classroom. The children squirted a dime-size amount of sanitizer on their hands and rubbed it in all over, under and around until it disappeared! The EFNEP Program Assistant emphasized to the children that using hand sanitizer is not as effective as washing soap and water, but it can help to control germs. To the teachers, she explained that classroom studies have shown hand sanitizers cut absenteeism due to infection by almost 20 percent.

After completing the EFNEP series one teacher wrote to the EFNEP Program Assistant, "Thank you so much for coming to teach our children. After working with your program the children are much more willing to wash their hands throughout the day. They remind each other that they need to wash and talk about how long they should wash. The children are still singing the song you taught them about hand washing." She continued by adding, "I truly feel that participating in your program will give my students hand washing skills that will last throughout their entire lives. Thank you for making a difference in the health of all children in Watauga County."

Pregnant Woman Learns the Importance of a Healthy Diet for Her Baby's Health

Mothers with unhealthy diets during pregnancy increase the risk that their child will be born with low birth weight and possible birth defects. Low birth weight is associated with an increased risk of serious and long-term health problems, including respiratory distress, bleeding in the brain, hearing and vision loss as newborns, and even death.² Although low birth weight and preterm birth are influenced by a myriad of factors, one factor continues to be the diet and health status of the mother.

EFNEP, in partnership with Today's Woman Clinic, delivered a series of lessons that encourage pregnant teens to eat healthier during their pregnancy, as well as to continue these practices after they deliver their baby. In a recent EFNEP lesson, the Program Assistant discovered that one of the pregnant mothers consistently ate unhealthy foods and drank an excessive amount of soft drinks. After completing the EFNEP classes and learning the positive impact eating healthy has on her child's health, she changed her diet to include more fruits and vegetables to ensure she had an adequate amount of folic acid as well as the nutrients that could help prevent birth defects. She also replaced much of her soda consumption with milk and water to avoid consuming excessive amount of sugar. She has expressed to her physician that she feels better and credits EFNEP with helping her understand the importance of proper nutrition for a healthy pregnancy and healthy baby.

Educating pregnant mothers on the importance of healthy lifestyles not only improves their personal health, but ensures their child has a healthy start to life. By emphasizing health and nutrition before the child is born, EFNEP is able to encourage long term changes in these young mother's lives that will continue throughout their child's life.

EFNEP helps address the challenges limited resource families face when introducing healthy changes through nutrition education, cooking classes, exercise strategies, and shopping on a limited budget.

1. Hammond, B., Ali, Y., Fendler, E., Dolan, M., & Donovan, S. (2000) Effect of hand sanitizer use on elementary school absenteeism. American Journal of Infection Control, 28(5):340-346.

2. March of Dimes Fact Sheets, http://www.marchofdimes.com/professionals/14332_1153.asp#head1

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efnep@ncsu.edu • www.ncfnep.org

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