

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2012 NC Cooperative Extension Forsyth County

Mother Helps Improve Her Son's Health

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), eating a well-balanced diet that contains high amounts of fruits and vegetables helps prevent chronic diseases, as well as aid in weight management. Unfortunately, many people do not eat enough fruits and vegetables every day.

In Forsyth County, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) from the North Carolina Cooperative Extension works with families to help improve their eating habits. One mother reported her 5 year-old would not drink milk or eat vegetables and fruits. Their family doctor was concerned about his weight and overall health. EFNEP helped the family make smart food choices, taught them how to read nutrition labels, encouraged the family to become more physically active, and helped with budgeting, meal planning and food safety. After the family attended classes, the mother stated that she realized the negative impacts of too much sugar intake from juices and other carbonated drinks, and has found positive ways to entice her children to choose fruits and vegetables. She now understands that healthy eating habits directly relate to prevention of obesity and other health problems.

EFNEP supports families who struggle overcoming the barriers to living a healthy lifestyle through education, budgeting, community support, and creative ways to prepare and cook healthy foods. With EFNEP, many families impacted by the program have made the necessary changes in their lifestyles to decrease their risk of chronic disease and improve their family's overall health and wellbeing.

Young Mothers Learn the Benefits of Breastfeeding

The American Academy of Pediatrics has stated human milk is the best milk choice for babies. This is because human milk contains all of the nutrients critical to infant growth and is the correct balance of proteins, carbohydrates, water, antibodies, hormones, micronutrients, and macronutrients. In fact, the balance of nutrients even adjusts during each feeding and over the course of lactation to provide the most appropriate nutritional content to the infant.¹ Numerous studies show that breastfeeding can reduce the risk of ear infections, non-specific gastroenteritis, and severe lower respiratory tract infections.² Breastfeeding also has a financial benefit because mothers will not have to spend money on formula milk and bottles, or spend time properly cleaning and disinfecting used bottles.

1. Lönnnerdal, B. (2003) Nutritional and physiologic significance of human milk proteins, *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 77(6), 1537S-1543S.

2. Ahiadeke, C. (2000) Breast-feeding, diarrhoea and sanitation as components of infant and child health: A study of large scale survey data from Ghana and Nigeria, *Journal of Biosocial Science*, 32, 47-59; Juraci A. César et al., Impact of breast feeding on admission for pneumonia during postneonatal period in Brazil: Nested case-control study, 318 *BRIT. MED. J.* 1316, 1320 (1999); Deborah D. Marino, Water and Food Safety in the Developing World: Global Implications for Health and Nutrition of Infants and Young Children, 107 *J. AM. DIETETIC ASS'N* 1930, 1930 (2007)

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

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Because of the significant benefits of breastfeeding, EFNEP in partnership with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension in Forsyth County and Today's Woman Clinic, worked with a group of pregnant teens to share with them the benefits of breastfeeding. At the beginning of the class about 50% of the teens had made a decision not to breastfeed and the other 50% were undecided. At the completion of the class, 100% of the pregnant teens stated they would breastfeed now that they were made aware of the health benefits of breastfeeding.

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.³ 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.

Because of the significant impact low birth weight has on the health of the child and the influence the mother's health and diet has on low weight births, 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
EXPANDED FOOD AND NUTRITION
EDUCATION PROGRAM

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