

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2012 NC Cooperative Extension Halifax County

Diabetic Mother Learns Healthy Ways to Control Her Blood Sugar

Diabetes, hypertension and obesity rank as the top health problems in a recent needs assessment for Halifax County.¹ Many county residents live on limited incomes and have few resources to help them make healthy affordable food choices for their families. In a recent Adult EFNEP class, families learned the importance of incorporating more fruits and veggies in their meals. Before participating in EFNEP, several of the participants admitted that they usually skipped the fresh veggies and fruits in the grocery stores because they thought they were too expensive. Instead, they chose a lot of rice and potatoes because they were cheaper. They share that they had always been under the assumption canned and frozen fruits and veggies were not healthy and only the fresh ones were good for you. Through the EFNEP lesson on fruits and veggies, they learned that all forms of veggies were healthy. By buying less rice and potatoes and more frozen and canned veggies, one mother was able to incorporate these much needed foods onto their families' diet. As a diabetic herself, she became more aware of the nutritional value of foods and used the labels on foods to make healthier food choices at the grocery store. She admitted that she felt much more in control of her diet and the diet of her family now that she used the skills she learned in the EFNEP class. Near the end of the classes she proudly told the group that at her last doctor's visit the doctor told her that her blood sugar was at a much better level than it had been in months. She proudly told him she had taken control of her health by using the skills she had learned in the EFNEP classes!

Another participant in the class shared that she had learned simple ways to get her kids moving and it did not cost a cent! She put restrictions on the amount of TV her kids were watching and began playing simple games in their yard after dinner.

Young Father Makes Healthy Changes and Loses 46 Pounds

In a recent EFNEP class for Head Start parents, one parent was successful in actively improving his family's nutrition and their level of physical activity. He is a young father with a pre-kindergarten child and 2 school age children. He described his family's usual food choices as "drive-thru dining." In the small rural town they lived in, there were 5 fast food restaurants within 2 blocks of their home. He readily admitted that he never read the nutritional labels when buying groceries and usually bought a lot of junk food. While in the EFNEP classes the father quickly learned how to read labels to make healthier food choices for his family and began to implement making more meals at home instead of eating fast food several times a week. He stopped buying

sodas. He introduced more fruits and veggies to his children's meals and was very surprised that his kids liked them! Several times a week he and his family would cut the TV off and take a brisk walk around his neighborhood. Near the end of the EFNEP classes he had lost 21 pounds and his wife had lost 12 pounds. After successfully completing the EFNEP classes, he stayed in touch and to date he has lost 46 pounds! He continues to prepare healthy EFNEP recipes for his family at home. He has also been named Father of the Year at his child's Head Start. He participated in the Head Start's family fun day by organizing and working at a booth where volunteer's made and served healthy fruit smoothies and yogurt and fruit parfaits to the participants. He took the time to talk with other parents at the family fun day about how he was able improve his families health by using the tools he learned in the EFNEP classes. He has become an advocate in his community for healthy lifestyles and has made himself available to participate in future EFNEP classes as a volunteer.



Youth Learn the Importance of Good Nutrition

The increased consumption of soda and other sugar-sweetened beverages is strongly associated with rising obesity and diabetes rates among children and youth.² Americans consume about 65 more calories a day from soft drinks than they did 30 years ago, which can add up to about 7 pounds of weight gain every year.³ It is critical that children and teens develop proper nutrition habits early in life because overweight or obese children are at a greater risk of becoming obese adults. Beginning in childhood, they are at increased risk of Type 2 diabetes, cardiac problems, bone and joint problems, and the psychosocial impact of weight-related teasing.⁴

This is concerning for Halifax County because 31.1% of the youth ages 5-11 in Halifax County are obese.⁵ EFNEP, in partnership with Hollister Elementary, are working to reverse this alarming statistic through a series of nutrition lessons for students. In the lessons, participants learned firsthand the effects of soda on their health. They learned there are no nutritional benefits in soda, and the youth were given the opportunity to measure out the amount of sugar into soft drinks to get a clear picture of what they were drinking. They didn't realize how many calories they consumed in what they drank. Healthier beverage choices were suggested like water, milk, and 100% fruit juice. After attending the program, 91% of the youth in the group lowered their consumption of sodas and other sugar sweetened beverages after the lesson.

1. Harris-Ellis, B. (2011) Halifax County state-of-the-county health report.

2. Ludwig, D.S., Peterson, K.E., & Gortmaker, S.L. (2001) Relation between consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks and childhood obesity: a prospective, observational analysis. *The Lancet*, 357:505-508.

3. American Heart Association. Understanding childhood obesity: An epidemic of excess. http://www.heart.org/idc/groups/heart-public/@wcm/@fc/documents/downloadable/ucm_304175.pdf

4. Boston Public Health Commission. Think about your drink. Newsroom, 2008.

5. North Carolina County Trends Reports: Halifax County. <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/schs/data/trends/pdf/Halifax.pdf>

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