

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2014 NC Cooperative Extension Columbus County

Family Takes Steps to Reduce Weight and Risks Associated with Obesity

The term obesity refers to a body weight that is greater than what is considered healthy for a certain height.¹ Health risks associated with obesity in adults are many and include heart disease, diabetes, cancer and metabolic syndrome. Risks associated with obesity in children are related to both physical and psychological health. Those risks include Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, sleep apnea, and low self-esteem caused by social stigmatization. Psychological risks can negatively affect academic performance and hinder social functioning.²

Over the past several years, the Columbus County Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) has worked with a severely obese family. The parents participated in EFNEP nutrition classes through the program's partnership with WIC, and the children participated in EFNEP through the program's partnership with Columbus County Schools. Because both the parents and the children experienced EFNEP, topics of conversation at home many times focused on making healthy food choices.

After graduating from EFNEP, the mother reported that since participating in the program her oldest son had been making low fat food choices, asking for grilled or bake foods instead of fried, and encouraging other family members to make healthy choices. She said, her son praised his siblings when he saw them making good choices by telling them, "Good job" or "I'm proud of you for choosing that healthy food." The mother also stated that her family was really trying to make conscientious decisions about the food they ate because her son had such a passion for everyone to be healthier, even though they had only made small changes so far. The mother shared that their weight is down, and they are taking the necessary steps to reduce the health risks associated with obesity.

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. <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/obe/risks.html>

2. <http://www.letsmove.gov/health-problems-and-childhood-obesity>

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United States Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture



Family Learns Gardening Can Help Manage Food Costs

Each year, the N.C. Department of Commerce annually ranks North Carolina's 100 counties based on economic well-being and assigns each a Tier designation. In 2014, Columbus County was ranked as a Tier One county. This means it was considered one of forty most distressed counties in North Carolina³. Many residents live below the poverty level and do not have jobs that provide health insurance. To help ensure these families practice the lifestyle behaviors that will keep them healthy, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) in Columbus County has for many years partnered with WIC to teach their limited income clients basic nutrition and physical activity concepts recommended by the USDA's Dietary Guidelines.

While receiving the "Choosing More Fruits and Vegetables" lesson from EFNEP's Eat Smart Move More curriculum, a middle-aged mother of 3 shared that she didn't have extra money for activities to do with her children. She also stated that the money received through SNAP didn't allow her to purchase a lot of the healthier foods, because they were more expensive. She confessed that she often found herself skipping meals so her children would have more to eat.

Upon learning this, the program assistant suggested that the family grow a fruit and vegetable garden. Gardening helps the children learn where their food comes from and provides physical activity opportunities for them as they plant, grow and harvest the crops. It also helps the family stretch their food dollars as the yield will provide fresh fruits and vegetables in season and canned or frozen out of season.

At her next visit to WIC, the mom reported that she had planted a garden and as a result, she and her family had saved an average of \$50 a month in grocery costs. She no longer had to skip meals as the garden yielded more than enough fresh fruit and vegetables for her family. The mother also stated that the garden had become a family activity and a way for her and the children to spend quality time together!

3. <http://www.nccommerce.com/research-publications/incentive-reports/county-tier-designations>