

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2014 NC Cooperative Extension Onslow County



Families Learn How to Reduce Screen Time and Improve Health

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) in Onslow County partnered with the local health department to deliver EFNEP's Families Eating Smart and Moving More curriculum to mothers participating in the Women's Infant and Children's (WIC) program. During the series of lessons provided, the mothers learned that reducing screen time can benefit their children both nutritionally and physically.

Research has shown that keeping the TV or electronic games off at mealtime can help the family focus on the food they are eating and the family conversation. Families are healthier because they are paying attention to what and how much they are eating instead of being distracted by shows or games.¹

Paying attention to what and how they are eating can also help the family control weight. Too often screen time takes the place of time spent outside. Junk food snacking in front of the screen adds calories and sitting does little to burn those calories off. EFNEP encouraged families to get outside instead of sitting, to take walks, and play physically challenging games to stay active. It also provided families taking the class with information on resources and community events that could entice the family outdoors.

After hearing the benefits that can be realized from less screen time, one mother stated that she decided to turn off the TV during dinnertime. Upon doing so, she found that because her child was no longer distracted by the show he was watching, he'd started to pay more attention to the food placed on his plate. Surprisingly, he began to eat more fruits and vegetables! And, he was more willing to try new foods that she had prepared using EFNEP recipes.

Another mom stated that her family chose to spend more family time together after dinner by taking walks in place of watching television. They had also spent constructive family time together attending the events and activities suggested by EFNEP.

Through EFNEP, Onslow County families learned the concerns related to too much screen time. By limiting the screen time in their homes, they had improved the health of their families both nutritionally and physically.

Young Military Mom Learns Safe Food Handling

In Onslow County, Cooperative Extension's Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) works closely with young military families enrolled in Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) at Tarawa Terrace to improve nutritional, food resource management, and food safety behaviors. Pre-program surveys taken by the clients often reveal the need to address improper thawing of frozen foods, particularly meats. EFNEP approaches this common problem by teaching the clients how to plan meals ahead of time and how to follow USDA food safety guidelines when preparing meals at home.

After discussing the safe ways to thaw meat, a young mom stated that she hadn't been aware that thawing meats at room temperature or in hot water could lead to the reproduction of bacteria. She stated, "When I arrive home from work, I grab a package of meat or chicken and use hot water to thaw it fast."

By practicing the skills taught in EFNEP, this mother soon realized that planning meals ahead of time allowed her to defrost meats in the refrigerator so they would be ready to cook when she arrived home after work. She no longer experienced the stress of deciding what to have for dinner on the way home! Plus, she saved time and money as trips to the grocery store for needed food items were not needed. Most importantly though, she was keeping her family safe from food borne illness by handling and preparing their food in the proper manner.

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.eatright.org/kids/article.aspx?id=6442468259#sthash.M4kSG3OM.dpuf>

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