

# EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

## 2014 NC Cooperative Extension Transylvania County County



### Fifth-Graders Use Nutrition Facts to Make Healthy Drink Choices

Fluid milk consumption in the United States has declined steadily since the 1970s. This decline is attributed to Americans substituting milk with less nutritious sugar-sweetened soft drinks. The problem arising is twofold. First, because of the decline in milk consumption, American children are not meeting the USDA's recommended daily adequate intake for calcium. Poor calcium intake negatively affects bone strength. Secondly, sugar consumption from the substituted soft drinks can lead to tooth decay and add calories that result in overweight and obesity.

To make children more aware of the nutrient content found in the drinks they consumed, the EFNEP program assistant in Transylvania County taught local fifth graders how to read the nutrition facts label. Then, to emphasize the amount of calcium found in milk and the amount of sugar found in soft drinks, she asked the children to compare the nutrition facts found on a variety of beverages. The students worked in groups to analyze the nutrients found in whole and skim milk, various sodas, and fruit-flavored beverages. Once analyzed, the youth determined which beverage was the most nutritious. Unanimously, their healthy drink choice was skim milk.

Before ending her program, the program assistant asked the students to identify times they typically consumed sugar-sweetened beverages and then create a personal goal to substitute that beverage with a nutrient-dense skim milk. When she returned the following week to continue the six-lesson EFNEP series, the students reported successes ranging from ordering milk instead of soda at restaurants to drinking milk instead of sweet tea when at home. Also impressive, after learning about the role calcium plays in building strong bones, one vegan child who had two broken bones in the past year, shared that, since they didn't drink milk, she and her mother were now drinking calcium-fortified orange juice to help ensure they got the calcium needed each day.

As simple as these changes may seem, they all contribute to an additional intake of calcium. Practicing additional calcium intake will help these Transylvania County fifth graders strengthen their bones, and reduce the number of pounds and cavities that could have resulted from drinking sugar-sweetened soft drinks.

#### References:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1829363/>  
<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Sugar>  
[http://kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition\\_center/healthy\\_eating/drink\\_healthy.html](http://kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition_center/healthy_eating/drink_healthy.html)

### Family Adopts Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Behaviors

Good nutrition and regular physical activity have been shown to improve the quality of life for adults and children by reducing the risk of overweight or obesity and subsequently the many chronic diseases associated with these conditions. Unfortunately, according to Healthy People 2020, the number of Americans who are overweight or obese has increased during the past decade and more than 80% of adult and adolescent Americans do not meet the recommendations for physical activity.

According to the research, key social determinants that foster eating healthful diets and regular physical activity are social support, knowledge, and attitude. The Transylvania County EFNEP program assistant, aware of the importance these social determinants can have in creating a better quality of life, designed a series lessons targeting the entire family based on EFNEP's Eating Smart and Moving More curriculum. Her intent was to create a learning opportunity for adults and youth that would increase their knowledge of how to practice healthful eating and physical activity behaviors. Partnering with a local boys and girls club, the program assistant taught participants basic nutrition and how to plan and prepare healthy meals. She also shared tips with them on how to become more physically active on a regular basis. Each family set diet and physical activity goals.

A single mother with two children told the program assistant "I am really enjoying the classes and I'm so glad that we are taking them as a family." She said that before participating in EFNEP, her kids were somewhat picky and did not eat a large variety of healthy food. They also spent a lot of time in front of the TV and computer screen. "Now, I remind my kids what we learned in class about healthy eating and they don't argue with me as much about eating their vegetables. And, as for incorporating more physical activity into our day, my kids remind me to exercise. Now we go for a walk as a family almost every night!"

EFNEP provided the knowledge that helped this family establish a positive attitude toward improving the quality of their lives. Practiced at a young age and with family support, their improved dietary and physical activity behaviors will follow them throughout their lifetimes.

#### Reference:

Healthy People 2020, 2020 Topics and Objectives: Nutrition and Weight Status and Physical Activity; Retrieved September 17, 2014. <http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topicsobjectives2020/default.aspx>

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