

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2014 NC Cooperative Extension Warren, Vance and Franklin Counties



First-Grader's Self Esteem Boosted by Making Healthy Choices

Poor diet and physical inactivity contribute to many serious and costly health conditions, including obesity, heart disease, diabetes, cancer, unhealthy cholesterol levels, and high blood pressure.¹ Obese children and adolescents have a greater risk of social and psychological problems, such as discrimination and poor self-esteem, which can continue into adulthood.²

The Warren County Cooperative Extension Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) partnered with the school system to encourage healthy eating habits. The EFNEP lessons teach children healthy eating and physical activity through interactive, hands-on learning that includes easy recipes for healthy snacks, fun ways to be physically active, and activities that engage the students in learning the recommendations of USDA's MyPlate.

Several children attending the EFNEP sessions were overweight or obese. As a result, the teachers and parents worried about their overall health. One 1st grader stated that his classmates frequently teased him because he is overweight. In addition, students excluded him from team activities and as a result he suffers from depression and low self-esteem. The Program Assistant really focused on making the student feel comfortable during each lesson and working with him to make healthier choices. After attending the 6-week EFNEP sessions, the 1st grader is eating more fruits and vegetables. He has eliminated sodas and candy from his diet and has reached and maintained a healthier weight.

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.cdc.gov/obesity/childhood/basics.html>

2. Ibid

Participant States, "EFNEP Has Started a Transformation in Me"

The prevalence of obesity in the United States has increased dramatically during the past few decades and is now a major public health concern. During 2007–2010, adults consumed, on average, 11.3% of their total daily calories from fast food.³ Studies have reported that more frequent fast-food consumption is associated with higher caloric and fat intake and lower intake of healthful nutrients.⁴

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) works to improve the health of limited resource youth and families with young children through practical lessons on basic nutrition and healthy lifestyles, resource management, and food safety. The Cooperative Extension EFNEP Program Assistant in Vance County offered Eat Smart Move More classes to the community to increase healthier foods choices. The sessions focused on stretching food dollars, MyPlate, food preparation, eating more fruits and vegetables, and physical activity.

One EFNEP participant stated that prior to EFNEP, her morning meals normally consist of two cigarettes, a king-size Hershey bar, and a cup of coffee consumed all while driving to work. For lunch, she normally ate fast food and after work she ate more fast food for dinner, usually pizza, cheesesteaks, french fries and/or potato chips. Following dinner, she watched television for about an hour and then ate popcorn, ice cream, cookies, etc. afterwards. Consequently, after years of this routine, she had gained approximately 65 pounds. After attending the 9-week class, the participant stated that EFNEP has started a transformation in her body and life. Currently, she is able to do things that once seemed impossible. She has stated that she now takes pride in her appearance and loves shopping. For the first time, her blood pressure is normal and the worry and risk of being diagnosed with diabetes has subsided. She concludes, that the series of "I can't do that" has taken a turn for the best and she is now constantly looking for ways to do more.

3. Bowman SA, Vinyard BT. Fast food consumption of U.S. adults: Impact on energy and nutrient intakes and overweight status. *J Am Col Nutr* 23(2):163–8. 2004.

4. Paeratakul S, Ferdinand DP, Champagne CM, Ryan DH, Bray GA. Fast-food consumption among U.S. adults and children: Dietary and nutrient intake profile. *J Am Diet Assoc* 103(10):1332–8. 2003.

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