

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2015 NC Cooperative Extension Martin County



Benefits of Drinking Milk

The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recognized that people who consume more dairy foods have better overall diets, tend to consume more nutrients and have improved bone health. The Dietary Guidelines also noted that diets rich in milk and milk products can reduce the risk of low bone mass throughout the lifecycle. MyPlate guidelines recommends consuming 2-3 servings of low fat milk products daily depending on age, gender, and level of physical activity. Regularly consuming milk products is especially important for children and adolescents who are building their peak bone mass and creating life-long habits. Despite these recommendations, per capita consumption of dairy products totaled 1.5 cups per day.

The Martin County Cooperative Extension Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) Program Assistant partners with several community organizations to teach limited resource families how to make healthier meal choices. Based on the pre-test from one of her adult groups, the Program Assistant taught a lesson on how to make smart drink choices. The Nutrition Program Assistant explained to the participants in the class that milk is a great source of calcium, which is essential for healthy bones. Not only do young children need it while their bones are growing, but adults need it to keep their bones strong and to prevent osteoporosis.

During this EFNEP session, one of the participants mentioned to the Nutrition Program Assistant that during her pregnancy, she always consumed dairy products but since she has given birth to her baby she does not consume as much dairy. She also stated that she is still trying to breastfeed her baby. The Nutrition Program Assistant immediately responded by explaining to the new mother how important it is for her to continue the consumption of dairy foods. The Nutrition Program Assistant recommended that the participant continue to drink at least three 8-ounce glasses (24 ounces) of nonfat milk each day, or eat a variety of other calcium-rich foods such as yogurt, cheese, dark leafy greens (such as kale and spinach), and almonds. The Nutrition Program Assistant stressed to the new mom how beneficial drinking low fat and skim milk is to her body as well as her newborn baby, while she continued to breastfeed.

During the following EFNEP session, the mother informed the Nutrition Program Assistant that she was indeed including more non-fat, low-fat, and skim milk products to her balanced meals on

a daily basis. The participant told the Program Assistant that she was glad she enrolled in EFNEP because she was not aware that milk had so many benefits that helped the body.

Youth are More Active Following EFNEP

According to the Centers for Disease Control, obesity has more than doubled in American children over the past 30 years. This epidemic leads to chronic health problems such as high blood pressure and heart disease. It may also be causing more than just physical harm, as research indicates childhood obesity may also threaten academic success.

With more access to technology, kids are spending less time on the playground and more time sitting around playing video games and watching television. To reduce the risk of childhood obesity, it is extremely important to encourage youth to go outside or choose activities that cause them to continuously stay moving so that they are getting their 60 minutes of physical activity each day. In Martin County, the Nutrition Program Assistant for the Cooperative Extension Expanded Food and Nutrition Program, emphasizes to youth in her EFNEP classes the importance of physical activity.

The Nutrition Program Assistant teaches students how to discover enjoyable ways to meet the physically active recommendations. In each class, the Program Assistant encourages the children to participate in activities that are age-appropriate and offer variety. She reminds each student to make sure they are doing these three types of physical activities: Aerobic Activity, Muscle Strengthening, and Bone Strengthening.

One of the Program Assistant's youth participants reported to her that because of the EFNEP classes she has increased her physical activity. The student stated that during physical education classes, she jumps rope, does gymnastics and sit-ups. During recess, she plays on the playground, runs and climbs. She also likes to play soccer, tag, and ride her bike with friends and family. The Program Assistant was excited to hear about the activities the participant had started participating in because of her classes! The statement from the young participant proved that all children can find interest in their own healthy eating and physical activity habits after being guided and taught the importance of choosing to live a healthier lifestyle.

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