

Family Living Focus

by
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Link Between Diet And Chronic Disease

Why does increasing nutrition education in the schools, the variety and overall consumption of fruits, vegetables, and dairy foods, and amount of student physical activity so strongly impact good health? Why are we

concerned with these objectives? The research is convincing that by meeting these goals we will be decreasing the risk of the major chronic diseases affecting Americans now and for our youth in the future: coronary heart disease, cancer, Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and obesity.

The following is a summary of some current scientific research linking a poor diet and chronic disease:

- Did You Know?**
- Only an average of 33-36 percent of children in the U.S. consume the recommended minimum number of servings (5) of fruits and vegetables, and dairy (3) based on USDA's Food Guide Pyramid.
 - Nationally the percentage of overweight children aged 6-18 has tripled in the last 30 years, doubled in the last 20 years, and is now at 15 percent.
 - Nearly one-third of all children aged 5-10 have one cardiac risk factor: elevated blood cholesterol, high LDL, high triglycerides (artery clogging fats in the blood), elevated insulin levels. 61 percent of overweight children have one cardiac risk factor, 27 percent have two risk factors.

• Eating a wide variety of fruits and vegetables is associated with lower body weight. They provide fiber and a feeling of fullness.

• Fruits and vegetables contain natural plant chemicals; many protect our body's cells from cancer and heart disease. Try adding new kinds and colorful varieties for taste and their protective

qualities to your meals and snacks.

• Dairy foods contain calcium and Vitamin D, essential for children to eat now while they are growing and to protect against the bone-thinning disease osteoporosis later in life. Adequate dietary calcium may also protect against colon cancer.

• The rate of Type 2 diabetes in Pennsylvania is exploding—the major causes are overweight and physical inactivity.

• Penn State University research shows children need to be exposed to new foods, especially vegetables, 10-12 or more times before they will accept them, and to decrease pickiness as well.

How can schools and parents help?

• Many Penn State Extension Family Living Educators are working with the Pennsylvania Department of Health, Pennsylvania Advocates of Nutrition and Physical Activity, schools and community partners to improve school-aged child health. Family Living Educators offer a variety of health-promoting programs in all counties. Contact your local educators for more information in your area.

Together we can improve the health of families and youth in Pennsylvania.

Holiday Fun And Foods

SPRINGFIELD (Delaware Co.) — Get a head start on the holidays with an afternoon or evening of great holiday foods and ideas to make holiday entertaining easy. Hors d'oeuvres, salads, desserts and holiday gifts will be prepared with audience participation.

Tips on surviving the holidays with less stress and at the same weight you started will also be given.

Classes will be conducted Thursday, Dec. 4 from 1 p.m.-3 p.m. or 6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m. at the Environmental Center in Smedley Park in Springfield.

To register, send \$6 to Delaware County Cooperative Extension, 20 Paper Mill Road, Smedley Park, Springfield, PA 19064.

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