

HEALTHY FAMILIES

A Middle School Program for Diabetes Prevention

VOLUME 1, SPRING 2007

THEY HAVE TO EAT HEALTHY TO BE HEALTHY

Sue* is a mom with a middle school aged son and two younger boys. Like many mothers, Sue has a busy life with lots of responsibilities to juggle. She works in the cafeteria of the local middle school and also drives the bus after school hours. The boys' father has diabetes, so she recognizes the importance of helping her sons make healthy choices. Here's her story:

"I have three children, all boys, 12, 10, and 6. They keep me busy. All day, all day. Washing, cooking, reading, playing. They just really keep me busy. I get up around 5:15, take my shower, and get ready to go to work. I leave the house about 6:15. I go to work from 6:30 to 2, and drive the bus from 2 to 4. They ride with me on the school bus, so they're with me when I finish work.

Probably around 5:30 or 6 we eat dinner. The kids take a while to eat and then they take their showers. We might sit and look at TV for about an hour and a half. We might have

a family discussion, which might last about an hour. They go to bed about 9:30.

Now, if I buy sodas, the boys will drink them. If I don't buy them, they won't ask for them, so they're not hard to please. I'm glad they don't really dwell on soda because that sugar is really not healthy for them.

I make them drink water every day. If I see them going to the refrigerator and they get some juice or some milk, the next time

they go I make them get some water. Or I won't put anything cold in the refrigerator and just make sure some cold water is in there and then they'll drink it.

I try hard because they have a father who has diabetes. He tells them all the time about sugar and salt, you know, what kind of problems they can cause. The boys really understand that they have to eat healthy to be healthy."

* not her real name



This newsletter is brought to you by the HEALTHY study, which is working with your child's middle school this semester to help students learn about the importance of drinking water. The story on this page and the other information in this newsletter comes from actual interviews with parents of middle-school students around the country.

HEALTHY STUDY UPDATE

In the classroom:

This semester, your child will be designing and creating a poster that shows why drinking more water and fewer drinks with added sugar is a good idea. You can help your child get ready by looking for pictures in magazines or newspapers that show healthy people drinking water.

In physical education:

This semester, your child will learn about the Fitness Laboratory on Wheel (FLOW). Ask your child to show you an exercise they liked and that they can do at home with you.

In the cafeteria:

There are changes in the lunchroom! New foods are available, and old foods have been changed. Has your child noticed that there are different choices now? Ask your son or daughter what they had for lunch today!

On the walls and in the halls:

New posters have been placed around the school to give the message that water is good for you. Ask your middle-school student if they have seen these words:

Let Water Be Your Life Force!

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. What drinks do you keep cold in your fridge?
2. How many glasses of water do you drink each day?
3. What does your child drink at school?
4. Have you talked with your kids lately about why water is important?



HEALTHY BALANCE

Parent tips for getting your kids to drink more water

- ✓ Keep bottles of water in the refrigerator.
- ✓ Make herbal iced tea and serve it unsweetened.
- ✓ Pack bottled water for lunch, instead of drinks with added sugar.
- ✓ Talk with your kids about why water is important to keep a body healthy.



Parent tips to help kids drink less soda and beverages with added sugar

- ✓ Set a limit on drinking soda or other beverages with added sugar.
- ✓ Don't buy soda or sugar-added beverages. If they are not available, kids can't drink them.
- ✓ Talk with your kids about how beverages with added sugar may contribute to unhealthy weight gain.