

HEALTHY FAMILIES

A Middle School Program for Diabetes Prevention

VOLUME 2, FALL 2007

IT TOOK ME A WHILE

Shirley* is a stay-at-home mom with three boys and one girl. The oldest is 17 and the youngest is 8. Her husband is a truck driver, so he's out every other day. Here is what Shirley says about keeping her kids healthy:

"It took me a while to get to where I am at right now. It was like I kept begging my kids, 'Let's go outside. Let's do something, let's go.' The first complaint I started getting was, 'But I have this to do and I have that to do.' But what were they doing? Watching TV.

You know they have a bunch of excuses. So I tell them, 'Well, I'm busy, too. I've got to clean, wash the dishes, wash clothes. So look, no excuses. Let's take some time and go outside.' My husband starts talking to them about diabetes and all that can happen. Diabetes is the reason we're trying to be active. I think it starts sinking in. His dad passed away with diabetes. And his mom just

passed away, and she had diabetes also. It does run in his family.

Now, we try to make at least thirty minutes to an hour every night to go outside and do some kind of activity — either walk or play or basketball. Finally, now I say, 'Let's go outside, come on, it's time for us to go outside.' And they say, 'Okay let's go.' You know, they drop whatever they're doing. Now I find sometimes I'm indoors and they're the ones saying, 'Mom, are you going to

come out today?' Or you know, they're pushing me out the door.

I've noticed that my 7th grader has lost some of his belly. And I think he's more active. He goes outside more, and he was my lazier one. To me, he's the one who was always stuck to the TV or wanting to play video games. But now he's different. I think once kids get used to being outside they will, you know, do it on their own."

* 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 being active. The story on this page and the other information in this newsletter comes from actual interviews with parents of middle school students across the country.

HEALTHY FAMILIES

HEALTHY UPDATE

In the Cafeteria

Almost no high-sugar drinks like soda and sports drinks are being sold in school anymore. Students have tried new HEALTHY foods during taste tests in the cafeteria. There are lots of fruits and vegetables for your child to choose from daily and we are glad that they are selecting more of each!

In the Classroom

In 7th grade, one focus of the HEALTHY study is: being more active. Your child will get a pedometer to keep and use. The pedometer counts the number of steps they take. Students will use the pedometer to help them see how active they are. HEALTHY students should do this on one school day and during a weekend.

In Physical Education

HEALTHY students have learned many new skills and fun fitness activities in PE. They also learned to be active from the very beginning of PE class. This year they will learn even more new games and skills.

How can you help?

- Ask your child to tell you what he or she likes about a favorite NEW food in the cafeteria.
- Keep fresh fruits and vegetables on hand at home for the whole family.
- Remind your child to wear the pedometer and turn in the pedometer tracking forms.
- Try using the pedometer yourself to see how active you are.
- Ask your child to show you some of the new activities he/she has learned in PE class.

HEALTHY BALANCE

Parent tips to increase physical activity

- ✓ Take a regular walk with your child.
- ✓ Be active and your child will follow your example.
- ✓ Make your family time active time.
- ✓ Take advantage of what your community has to offer, like parks, schoolyards, and community centers.



THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. When is the last time you played tag with your kids?
2. Where can you go to take a 30-minute walk with your kids?
3. How often do your kids go outside to play?
4. Have you talked with your kids lately about why physical activity is important?



Parent tips to decrease screen time (TV or computer)

- ✓ Set up a weekly schedule of TV watching.
- ✓ Take the TV out of bedrooms to help limit TV time.
- ✓ Set a daily limit on TV and computer or video game time.
- ✓ Help to limit TV time by asking your child to choose 1 or 2 favorite programs.