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Dear EAT RIGHT MONTANA Friend:

The summer of 2002 is almost over – and back-to-school days are right around the corner. Our August press release covers the **tween generation**. The food focus is on **beef** and the fitness topic is **families with tweens**. We also offer an updated version of a previous handout on what parents and schools can do to **help tweens move toward a healthy weight**.

Tweens, **kids between the ages of 8 and 12**, are getting lots of attention these days. Recently, government agencies, health groups, and soft drink companies have all announced campaigns designed to improve the food and fitness habits of the “Millennial” generation. Experts agree that there’s plenty of room for improvement in this group: with rapid increases in weight problems; high intakes of soft drinks and fast food; and sedentary play with the three N’s (Nintendo, Netscape and Nickelodeon).

This fall, programs for middle school students will be rolled out by Coca-Cola® (**Step with It**) and Pepsi-Cola® (**Get Active, Stay Active**). Details on the other programs are already available online at:

- **BAM! Body and Mind** (answers to kids’ health questions from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) @ <http://www.bam.gov/>
- **Kidnetic.com** (healthy eating and active living tips from a coalition of nutrition and health organizations) @ <http://www.kidnetic.com/>
- **VERB – It’s what you do** (campaign to promote physical activity also spearheaded by the CDC) @ <http://www.verbnow.com/>

For a thorough discussion of tween nutrition and physical activity, check out the June/July 2002 issue of the **School Foodservice and Nutrition** from the American School Food Service Association. Abstracts available on the web @ <http://www.asfsa.org/childnutrition/sfn/abstracts/0206.asp>

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What TWEENS want and need:

Thinking about food and nutrition for the Millennial generation

- Child development experts refer to tweens (kids ages 8 to 12 – between childhood and adolescence) as **the role/rule stage**. Their needs and wants include acceptance, success, role enactment, and rule learning. They are both reluctant and eager to leave their childhood (foods, toys, games, etc.) behind.
- Tweens want **acceptance** from peers, siblings, and parents as they develop an adult self-image. Kids at this age are group-oriented and they tend to be conformists – as they explore social roles and peer relationships. This means that they will usually want to eat what the people around them are eating.
- During the tween stage, young people are beginning to develop their moral sense and values, lifelong rules for right and wrong, good and bad. As part of this process, they begin to identify with and to emulate **role models**. The health habits of important teens and adults can have a profound effect on tweens.
- **Cooperation** is another important need for tweens. They look for, and enjoy, opportunities to share and to interact with different groups in their community. Tweens like to volunteer – and can learn important lessons from working with seniors, younger children, and people with disabilities.
- Another key issue for this betwixt and between generation is **control**. They want power over their environment as they learn how to make their own decisions. Parents, teachers, and youth leaders can help by giving tweens lots of chances to practice making choices – like healthy food choices.
- **Sensory gratification** is very important to tweens. This means that the eye-appeal and the presentation of meals and snacks are important to them. They care about color, shape, smell, taste, and texture – and about the packaging of food and beverages. Tweens want food that is fun to handle and to eat.
- Tweens like **humor** – what older folks sometimes think is the “dark side” of humor. They like slapstick – and often go for things that seem gross, violent, and taboo to adults. Who do you think is the target market for food and beverage products like purple ketchup, pink margarine, extremo burritos, and lizard’s breath ice tea?
- If you want to know more about what’s hot and what’s not on the tween scene, online is the place to go. Here are a few websites designed for the tween psyche:
 - <http://www.foxkids.com/>
 - <http://www.sikids.com/>
 - <http://www.yahooligans.com/>
 - <http://yucky.kids.discovery.com/>

Provided by Eat Right Montana



**Moving Montana Toward a Fit Future: What about tweens?
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Healthy Families 2002: Healthy weights for kids 8 to 12 (8th in a series of 12)

The “tween generation” is getting a lot of attention these days. Kids 8 to 12 are the focus of several recently announced health campaigns. Medical groups, government agencies, soft drink companies and snack manufacturers are all targeting tweens with food and fitness messages.

“Health experts are concerned about the stage between childhood and adolescence for many reasons,” says Katie Bark, RD, registered dietitian with the Office of Public Instruction and Montana’s Team Nutrition Program. “When it comes to food and fitness, tween trends are in the wrong direction.”

Numerous studies have documented the problems in tween nutrition and physical activity.

- The rates of overweight and obese children ages 8 to 12 are rising dramatically.
- Many tweens are beginning to follow fad diets and to develop eating disorders.
- Intakes of vital nutrients, like iron and calcium, are dropping just when kids need them most.
- Kids are spending more time with TVs and computers, and less time in active play.
- More tweens are being diagnosed with risk factors for heart disease and Type 2 diabetes.

According to Bark, reversing these negative trends will require action by families, schools and communities. “Role models are very important at this age,” she notes. “Parents, grandparents, teachers, coaches, and youth leaders can influence tweens by making healthy choices for themselves.”

Eat Right Montana, a statewide coalition promoting healthful eating and active lifestyles, supports healthy food options and nutrition education for all young people. To grow strong bodies and smart brains, kids need easy access to fun foods that are packed with power nutrients.

“All of us can help tweens have a healthy future,” says Bark. “We can provide nutritious food choices in our homes and at group functions. We can also support healthy school policies, like more milk and water in vending machines – and reduced access to soft drinks.”

ATTACHED: “*Eating Beef the Healthy Weigh*” and “*Fitness for the Tween Generation*”

Eating BEEF the Healthy Weigh

Looking for a nutrient boost? Tired of expensive vitamin-mineral supplements? Bored with bland low-fat meals? Love to eat beef – but think that it is too high in fat? Think again: Today's beef is leaner than ever – and every bite offers a power pack of nutrients.

1. Eating beef for HEALTH.

When it comes to nutrition, today's beef is full of good news. Beef's "skinny seven" cuts (from the round and loin) offer great taste – with minimal fat. For delicious, heart-smart meals, choose lean beef cuts like sirloin, tenderloin, top round, and round tip.

2. Eating beef for ZINC.

Beef is the number one source of zinc for Americans. One 3-ounce serving of lean beef provides nearly 40% of the zinc most people need in a day – for normal growth and development, as well as healthy immune systems, wound healing, and appetite control.

3. Eating beef for IRON.

Even a short-term lack of iron can affect physical and mental functioning. Longer-term deficiencies may affect brain development and IQ levels in children. The iron in beef (heme iron) is readily absorbed. Heme iron also helps you absorb iron from other foods.

4. Eating beef for PROTEIN.

Three-ounces of lean beef contains 50% of the recommended amount of daily protein – for maintaining muscle mass, supporting immune systems, and providing long-lasting energy. That's how beef can add Z.I.P. (zinc, iron, and protein) to your meals and snacks.

5. Eating beef for B VITAMINS.

Beef offers a delicious bundle of several B vitamins; all vital to help your body unleash energy from other foods. Calorie for calorie, lean beef is one the richest sources of many essential B vitamins – like riboflavin, thiamin, and B₁₂ – that your body needs every day.

6. Eating beef for SELENIUM.

Selenium is an anti-aging, antioxidant nutrient that may help to prevent heart disease and certain types of cancers. Just one 3-ounce serving of beef – about the size of a deck of cards – provides 31% of the recommended daily intake of selenium.



**Celebrating
Healthy
Families 2002**

Fitness for the Tween Generation

The time between 8 and 12 years is sometimes called the role/rule stage. This is the time when children explore possible adult roles – and the rules that will guide them through life. In terms of fitness, this is the time to try activities and set habits for a lifetime.

1. Be a **ROLE MODEL** for fitness.

Your children will do as they see you do – no matter what you say. The best way to encourage tween fitness is to get off the couch and be active yourself. Kids may choose different ways to be active – but they need to know that fitness is important to you.

2. Find activities that **FIT THE CHILD**.

Different body types are better at different activities. Consider the obvious differences between football players and distance runners. Help your children discover their natural strengths and abilities – by giving them the chance to try out lots of different activities.

3. Make it **FUN**.

The key to an active lifestyle is enjoyment. Kids do not like to exercise and they will not participate in a sport or go to a fitness class just because it is “good for them.” Find out what your kids love to do – and then make sure they have the chance to do it regularly.

4. Choose the **RIGHT EQUIPMENT**.

The right sports equipment is critical for enjoyment and for safety. Kids need comfortable clothes, shoes and equipment that fit well and are appropriate for the activity. They also need firm rules about safety – like eye protection, body pads, and helmets.

5. Explore activities to last a **LIFETIME**.

Organized sports are great – and they are just right for many kids. However, some kids prefer individual and non-competitive activities. The key is to help young people find a variety of physical activities – so that they can enjoy a lifetime of fitness.

6. Show up and **ENCOURAGE** them.

Children of all ages need adult approval and encouragement. Active parental support is especially important during the tween years. Whether your kids are into football or Frisbee golf, baseball or boarding, they need your involvement and encouragement.



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Moving Tweens Toward Healthy Weights:

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO TO HELP

- ✓ **Resist your parental desire to nag.** All children need to feel love and acceptance. Overweight kids need to know that your love is not conditional on their weight loss. Nagging children about weight often has the opposite of its desired effect. Respect your tween's desire to be healthy – and find them the help that they want.
- ✓ **Be the role model that your kids need.** Research shows that children really do as they see, not as they hear. To help your tween move toward a healthy weight, avoid fad diets and weight loss schemes; enjoy balanced choices from the Food Guide Pyramid; and make physical activity one of your family's most important values.
- ✓ **Offer regular family meals and make nutrition-to-go available.** Today's tweens lead busy lives and they may not be around at mealtimes. Stock up on grab-and-go foods, like string cheese, yogurt, bananas, bagels, and beef jerky. Make family meals as convenient, tasty and stress-free as possible – so tweens will want to be there.
- ✓ **For more information:** Check out books by Ellyn Satter, MS, RD, CICSW, *Secrets of Feeding a Healthy Family* (1999) and *How to Get Your Kid to Eat* (1987), esp. the chapter 12 on “The Individualistic Teenager.” Available @ www.ellynsatter.com

WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO TO HELP

- ✓ **Expand access to power foods.** Most schools have few healthy choices in beverage machines, snack machines, student stores and other food sales. Innovative programs in many school districts have demonstrated that kids will make positive choices – when healthful options are tasty, convenient, competitively priced, and “cool.”
- ✓ **Expand opportunities for physical activity.** Studies show that physical activity declines dramatically as children get older. The availability of traditional PE classes is also declining. Since regular, moderate physical activity is essential to maintain a healthy weight, tweens need fun activities for all sizes, shapes and abilities.
- ✓ **Expand effective, real-life nutrition education.** Adolescents need nutrition advice that works for their 24/7, fast lane lifestyles. Positive, practical, simple and consistent nutrition messages can be integrated into all areas of middle and high schools, including athletic coaching, classroom teaching, and food service offerings.
- ✓ **For more information:** Check out an exciting new kit from the US Department of Agriculture's Team Nutrition program: **Changing the Scene: Improving the School Nutrition Environment** available @ www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Healthy/changing.html



**Celebrating
Healthy Families
2002**

Moving Montana Toward a Fit Future: Start today for a healthy weight

January 2002

- **The ABCs of a Healthy Weight**

February 2002

- **Moving toward a Healthy Weight for Women**

March 2002

- **Moving toward a Healthy Weight for Men**

April 2002

- **Moving toward a Healthy Weight for Children**

May 2002

- **Moving toward a Healthy Weight for Pregnant Women**

June 2002

- **Moving toward a Healthy Weight After Having a Baby**

July 2002

- **Moving toward a Healthy Weight for Babies and Toddlers**

August 2002

- **Moving toward a Healthy Weight for Tweens**

September 2002

- **Moving toward a Healthy Weight for Teens**

October 2002

- **Moving toward a Healthy Weight for Seniors**

November 2002

- **Moving toward a Healthy Weight for Menopause**

December 2002

- **Moving toward a Healthy Weight Forever**

