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October 1, 2004

Dear Colleagues:

Welcome to the October 2004 issue of **Eat Right Montana's Simple Steps for a Healthy Weight**. This month, we highlight a brand-new educational effort based on the theme - **FIT KIDS = HAPPY KIDS**. A brightly colored poster with the same theme is posted on our site at www.montanadieticassociation.org/promo.html. In this packet, we offer a handout on **Six Simple Steps to a Healthy Weight for Kids**, along with **practical tips for healthier Halloween celebrations**.

These educational efforts could not be more timely. On September 30, 2004, the Institute of Medicine released a preliminary report on **Preventing Childhood Obesity: Health in the Balance** (for more information visit www.iom.edu/report.asp?id=22596). This detailed study documents the increasing prevalence, multiple causes, and high costs (both physical and emotional) of childhood obesity.

Preventing Childhood Obesity lists the immediate steps needed to confront the problem. The report also clearly outlines who must be involved in creating effective solutions:

"Although a number of organizations, industries, institutions, and agencies must be involved in designing and implementing changes, efforts cannot succeed unless they also engage the families, schools, and communities that create the environments in which children live and their behaviors are formed."

We hope that you will find this month's materials (as well as previous **Eat Right Montana** packets) useful in reaching the parents of young children with positive messages. We believe that messages must be both fun and practical in order to engage parents in the process of gradually moving toward healthier habits and healthier weights.

Thank you for your past and future support of **Eat Right Montana**. Feedback is always important to us; please let us know what you think.

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**Simple Steps for a Healthy Weight: #10. FIT KIDS = HAPPY KIDS
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MT Department of Public Health and Human Services – 406/947-2344**

Healthy Families 2004: Helping kids maintain healthy weights (10th in a series of 12)

Like children all across the USA, kids in Montana are increasingly overweight, undernourished, and at risk for serious health problems like diabetes and high blood pressure. Several statewide health organizations, led by Montana pediatricians, are launching an educational campaign to help families take simple steps toward healthy weights for children.

“Obesity, Type 2 diabetes, and joint pain have become everyday problems in pediatricians’ offices,” says Marian Kummer, MD, with The Children’s Clinic in Billings and vice-president of the Montana Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics (MT-AAP). “These serious issues are hard to treat at any age. Fortunately, they can be prevented – with some changes in family eating and activity patterns.”

Understanding that parents need practical advice on how to eat smarter and be more active, MT-AAP worked with health experts at Eat Right Montana and Montana Action for Healthy Kids to create simple nutrition and activity messages for Montana families. The graphic artists at Heins Creative in Billings incorporated the positive messages into an eye-catching poster and informative handout – designed to answer the question: *How can I help my child have a healthy weight?*

According to Dr. Kummer, the answer is straightforward. “Families need to develop healthier habits – to help both kids and their parents maintain a healthy weight. In these materials, we focus on a few, small changes that can have a life-long impact on anyone’s weight and health.”

The “*Six Simple Steps to a Healthy Weight for Kids*” are easy – and realistic on any budget. They include: (1) playing together inside and outside; (2) making family meals a special time to eat together; (3) saving fast food for a once or twice a week treat; (4) enjoying fruit and veggies together; (5) drinking milk with meals and water with snacks; and (6) taking the TV out of a child’s bedroom.

With support from the Montana Health Education Center (AHEC), Montana Team Nutrition, and Montana Cardiovascular Health Program, thousands of posters will be distributed to doctors’ offices and health clinics, as well as classrooms in schools, childcare settings, and Head Start programs. To obtain copies of the poster and handout, contact **Jan Donaldson at 406-443-5006**.

ATTACHED: *Steps to a Healthy Weight for Kids and Making Halloween Healthier*

Six Simple Steps to a Healthy Weight for Kids

1. Be active by playing together inside and outside.

For a healthy weight, kids and adults need 30 to 60 minutes of daily physical activity. Play with your kids every day – fun for them, fun for you too!

- ✓ **Play inside:** Turn off the TV and play an old-fashioned game of hide-and-seek. Clear a space for wiggling, dancing, and playing with soft-foam balls or squishy toys.
- ✓ **Play outside:** The options for outdoor play are unlimited: bikes, trikes, scooters, balls, kites, Frisbees, jump ropes, squirt guns, hula-hoops, hopscotch, and tag.
- ✓ **Play at the park:** Most towns have fun park facilities, sometimes close enough to walk or ride a bike. When the weather is nice, take a picnic and play before dinner.

2. Make family meals a special time to eat together.

Eating more meals together can make a big difference in your family's health, happiness, and finances. Dinners at home are easier (and cheaper) than you think!

- ✓ **Plan a weekly menu:** Make it simple or make it detailed – the key is to have a plan. Involve the whole family; let each person have a night to pick their favorite dishes.
- ✓ **Cook once, eat twice:** Cut down on prep time. Cook and freeze key ingredients, like ground beef for tacos and spaghetti sauce, or main dishes, like lasagna and casseroles.
- ✓ **Keep the cupboard stocked:** Pack your pantry (and freezer) with staples like canned beans, tuna, and fruit; pasta, rice, and baking mixes; and frozen vegetables.

3. Save fast food for a once or twice a week treat.

Fast food is loaded with calories, fat, and sugar. Whether you drive-thru or go inside, here are some smart tips to help you eat better in the fast food lane.

- ✓ **Share a super size:** There's a way to make mega portions work for you: share them! By sharing a large order of fries, you eat fewer calories, less fat, and save money too.
- ✓ **Switch to power drinks:** A 44-oz. soft drink has over 450 calories and $\frac{3}{4}$ -cup sugar – with no nutrient value. Get power nutrients with low-fat milk or 100% orange juice.
- ✓ **Choose nutrient-rich options:** Many national chains now offer tasty, fun choices in kids' meals – like flavored milk instead of pop and mandarin oranges instead of fries.

4. Enjoy tasty fruit and veggie snacks together.

Serve a rainbow of produce every day – at least 5 juicy, crunchy, crispy, tasty fruits and vegetables. Fresh, frozen, dried, canned, and juice – they all count for 5 A Day!

- ✓ **Enjoy green fruits and veggies:** For snacks or dinner, green comes in dozens of delicious flavors – like sliced kiwi fruit or broccoli trees with light Ranch dip.
- ✓ **Enjoy yellow-orange fruits and veggies:** For morning, afternoon, or evening snacks, choose a fresh orange, canned pineapple, or baby carrots and yellow pepper slices.
- ✓ **Enjoy red fruits and veggies:** Red is a tasty color for produce – any time of day! Try frozen berries, watermelon, or canned tomato sauce on pasta, pizza, or tacos.

5. Drink milk with meals and drink water with snacks.

Dairy products can help kids (and adults) maintain a healthy weight, build strong bodies, and lower blood pressure. Water is always refreshing – and calorie-free.

- ✓ **Serve low-fat milk with meals:** The best way to get your kids to drink milk is to drink milk yourself with every meal. Aim for a total of 16 to 24 ounces per day.
- ✓ **Offer water at snack time:** Everybody needs fluid to stay well hydrated, especially in warm weather. Water quenches your thirst – without adding extra calories or sugar.
- ✓ **Steer clear of sugary drinks:** For beautiful teeth and strong bodies, wise parents limit soft drinks, fruit punch, fruit drinks, sweet tea, and other high-sugar drinks.

6. Take the TV out of the bedroom and read together.

Pediatricians recommend no TV for children under three years, no more than two hours of total screen time a day for older kids, and no TVs in children's rooms.

- ✓ **Improve your child's fitness level:** Turning off the TV gives kids more time for active play – plus they miss all those commercials for candy, chips, and sugar cereals.
- ✓ **Improve your child's school performance:** Children who have less time screen time (TV, computers, and video games) tend to read more and do better in their classes.
- ✓ **Improve your child's sleeping habits:** There are many benefits to taking the TV out of a child's bedroom: calmer bedtime routines, more bedtime stories, and better sleep.



Four Realistic Ways to Have a Healthier Halloween

The healthiest part of Halloween is that kids get some physical activity by walking from house to house. The worst part is that most kids collect a month's worth (or more) of sugar in one night – and then overeat sweets for days (or weeks) afterwards. Fortunately, there are several ways to create healthier Halloween celebrations – without getting into a battle over every piece of candy. (You can use these same ideas for other holidays too!!)

1. Offer healthier treats:

The trick is find something that fits your budget, that kids will enjoy – and that parents will know is safe for their children. You can choose non-food items – or foods/drinks with less fat and sugar. Although most kids are probably not overly excited about getting a toothbrush, actual research shows that they are quite happy to get alternative treats, like:

- ✓ Stickers or temporary tattoos
- ✓ Gel pens, pencils, or erasers
- ✓ Plastic rings or bracelets
- ✓ Squeeze-foam balls
- ✓ Nickels, dimes or quarters
- ✓ Sugar-free gum
- ✓ Miniature boxes of raisins
- ✓ Boxes of fruit juice
- ✓ Individual packages of string cheese, jerky, nuts, or peanut butter crackers

2. Set healthier limits for your child:

Although the world may go candy-crazy around you, you decide how much your child participates. Stick to usual healthy mealtime, bedtime, and tooth brushing routines – they are more important than ever. You can also limit the amount of candy your child eats by:

- ✓ Visiting just a few houses – and going home for a bedtime snack of crunchy carrots and cheese.
- ✓ Going out for a short time – and going home to bob for apples or play your favorite game.
- ✓ Using candy only as an after-dinner dessert – or always serving a glass of milk with candy snacks.

3. Plan a healthier celebration in your home:

You can have a ton of fun with an at-home party – where you make sweets a small part of the celebration. Kids of all ages love old-fashioned games: bobbing for apples, pinning the tail on a scarecrow, or pumpkin carving contests. Costume parades with crazy prize categories are always a hit. Put party foods, like popcorn, trail mix, and oatmeal cookies in empty pumpkin shells, and offer lots of fruits and veggies (with orange-colored dips!).

4. Get other families involved in healthier options:

You can spread out the fun (and the workload) by involving others in your neighborhood, school, or club (like Scouts or 4-H). It can be as simple as coordinating who will give out candy or healthier alternatives on your block – or as elaborate as a holiday mini-carnival with active games, silly prizes, and fun food at your local school. Remember, kids always win when parents take the time to plan for healthier options.



www.montanadieticassociation.org/promo.html

Celebrating
Healthy Families
2004

HEALTHY FAMILIES 2004

Simple Steps for a Healthy Weight

JANUARY 2004

1. Keep a record.

FEBRUARY 2004

2. Develop a routine.

MARCH 2004

3. Balance food and activity.

APRIL 2004

4. Take a daily dose of moderation.

MAY 2004

5. Enjoy variety every day.

JUNE 2004

6. Take time for health every day – at home.

JULY 2004

7. Take time for health every day – at work.

AUGUST 2004

8. Take time for health every day – on vacation.

SEPTEMBER 2004

9. Take time for health every day – for children's sake.

OCTOBER 2004

10. Take time for health every day – around town.

NOVEMBER 2004

11. Take time for health every day – at organizations.

DECEMBER 2004

12. Celebrate the joy of health every day.



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