



CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH



Parent Link
Linking Parents to Early Childhood Success

February 2011

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for Black History Month events in the community!

Eat Your Colors!

By Christine R. Hughes, Ph.D., Research & Evaluation Analyst

Getting children to eat healthy foods is a struggle for many parents, but it must start with having healthy foods available. The U.S. dietary guidelines emphasize the importance of whole, fresh foods in our diet, most of which should be made up of fruits, vegetables, and grains. When it comes to fresh produce, a good rule to remember is: "Eat your colors!" Fruits and vegetables are so different in color and each one contains different types of vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals. Phytochemicals might sound a bit strange but they are actually essential to our health as humans, and are only found in plant foods (like fruits, vegetables, and herbs). So try to incorporate as many different colors into each meal as possible.

Some examples include:

Red - apples, strawberries, cherries, watermelon, pomegranates, red peppers, tomatoes, red onions, beets, red beans

Yellow/Orange - oranges, bananas, mangoes, papayas, tangerines, peaches, pineapples, apricots, grapefruit, lemons, cantaloupe, nectarines, carrots, squash, corn, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, yellow & orange peppers

Green - leafy greens (cabbage, lettuce, spinach, kale, collards, etc.), green peppers, asparagus, broccoli, green beans, peas, green onion, brussel sprouts, okra, zucchini, green apples, grapes, honeydew melon, kiwi, limes

Blue/Purple - eggplant, blueberries, blackberries, plums, grapes, raisins

White - cauliflower, mushrooms, white beans, onions, garlic, parsnips, turnips, ginger, jicama, yucca, pears

For strategies to help your children eat more fruits and vegetables, the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) have some great online resources, especially the publication, http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/downloads/kids_fv_tips.pdf.

References

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)-
<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov>
U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)- <http://www.mypyramid.gov/>
Produce for Better Health Foundation-
<http://www.pbhfoundation.org/pulse/success/campaigns/colorway/>
U.S. Surgeon General-
<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/obesityprevention/resources/>
Florida Department of Health's Women, Infants & Children (WIC) program-
<http://www.floridawic.org>

Encourage a Picky Eater to Eat

By Yesenia Reyes, Early Learning Coalition Staff

Do you have a little one that won't touch a carrot stick, let alone eat it? Don't worry; it is common for toddlers to be picky eaters. According to Dr. Leann Birch, Professor and Head of the Human Development and Family Studies Department at Penn State University, children between the ages of two and five are naturally 'neophobic,' which means they have an innate fear of trying anything new or foreign, and this includes food.

So what to do? Patience is key, so don't give up. Parents who get discouraged by picky eaters often stop trying to give their children new foods which could lead to future health problems. Use the following tips to encourage your picky eaters to explore new foods:

It's never too early.

It's important to expose your child to healthy fruits and vegetables at an early age. Food preferences that children develop in their early years usually remain stable in later childhood.

Once is not enough.

Just because your child did not like peas the first time doesn't mean you should stop serving them. Research has shown that through multiple exposures, sometimes five to ten times, a child might eventually learn to like the new food.

Be a role model.

A recent study found that two- and three-year-old's food preferences are significantly related to foods that their mothers liked, disliked, and never tasted. So the best way to teach your children about healthy eating is by making it a part of your everyday lifestyle.

Don't restrict foods.

Explain to a child there are "all-the-time foods," like fruits and vegetables, and "sometimes foods," like candy and desserts that they can have once in awhile. Have "all-the-time foods" available for snacks...all the time!

Make it fun!

Make snack- and meal-time creative, colorful and playful by allowing the child to touch, taste, smell and hear how good the food is for them.

-Do a taste test or a crunch test!

Dip carrots into three different flavors of low-fat dressing or try a crunch test with three different kinds of vegetables to see which vegetable crunches the loudest!

-Make faces!

Sometimes making the food visually exciting, such as making faces or designs on the food can tempt your toddler to eat it.

-Become chefs!

Preparing meals together can encourage your toddler to eat what he or she has made.

References

Early Childhood Feeding and Nutrition, Angela Oswalt, MSW, Natalie Staats Reiss, Ph.D and Dombeck, Ph.D. <http://www.bhcmhmr.org>

"I Don't Want It!": Tips to Help Your Preschooler Overcome Picky Eating, Jane S. Park, Senior Curriculum Specialist, Health Advisor Sesame Workshop, Education and Research Department, <http://www.pbs.org/parents/special/article-nutrition-picky.html>

Obesity - The What and How to Prevent it

By Bethany Sands, Director of Inclusion, Early Learning Coalition

Obesity has become such a problem among children that it is now considered an epidemic by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

What is obesity? Obesity is defined as a person who is severely overweight. Children are classified as obese if they weigh 20% more than the ideal weight for their height and age. One in five children in Florida is obese.

Causes of Obesity? The CDC notes that obesity is primarily caused by two factors: *diet and physical activity*. Children who become obese usually have a higher caloric intake and limited or no physical activity.

Concerns with Obesity

The CDC reports that obesity can put a child at risk for severe health conditions including:

Physical health issues

- Pediatric hypertension
- Risks of coronary heart disease
- Type II diabetes

Social and emotional issues

- Less acceptance from their peers
- Discrimination from significant adults
- Exhibition of a greater sense of rejection and failure
- Poorer interpersonal relationships
- Limited group and social interests

What can we do?

Obesity is easy to recognize and hard to treat. The University of Michigan recommends that parents monitor the diet and physical activity of their children. Replace fatty foods with healthier options, make sure to control serving sizes, and have them drink water--lots of water.

Monitor safe and regularly-scheduled physical activity. Children should be physically active for at least **60 minutes a day**. A weekly plan for activity should include:

- Everyday- 60 minutes of activity such as walking, running, swinging, climbing, playing ball, etc.

- 3-5 times a week- high-energy activity that gets the heart pumping
- 2-3 times a week- leisure activities such as swinging
- TV and computer- 30 minutes a day but do NOT sacrifice opportunities for physical activity

Teach children to be healthy from the start!

Ask Dr. Hughes!

Do you have questions for our resident expert in child development? Ask Dr. Hughes!

Each month in *Parent Link*, Research and Evaluation Analyst Christine Hughes, Ph.D., will answer your questions about child development. Topics can cover language, social skills, play, behavior, motor skills, and thinking and learning from ages birth to 5-years-old.

Dr. Hughes earned her B.A. in psychology from Boston College, and her M.S. and Ph.D. in applied developmental psychology from the University of Miami where she currently teaches part-time. Her research has focused on the development of at-risk infants and children in early intervention. Please email your questions to info@elcmdm.org with "Ask Dr. Hughes" in the subject line. Also, include the location of your residence in Miami-Dade and/or Monroe County (e.g., Coconut Grove, Kendall, Key West).

Please note that questions may be edited, and not every question received will be answered in the newsletter. To protect the privacy of individuals and maintain confidentiality, names will not be printed, but we may refer to individuals by area (for example, "A mother in Miami Beach asked..."). The information provided in this column released by the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe courtesy of Dr. Hughes is not intended to be used as psychological or medical advice, diagnosis, treatment, or as any other professional mental health or medical service. As laws, details and personal situations vary from person to person and state to state, articles and content contained in the newsletter are not and cannot be used as a substitute for legal, parental, health, mental health, or any other advice.

The column is not intended to be a solicitation of business or the furnishing of self-help advice. Readers are strongly urged to consult independent and qualified professionals before making any decisions. The views expressed are those of the writer and not necessarily of the ELC.

The ELC and You - Great Children's Books that Encourage Healthy Eating

What better way to encourage your young ones to eat healthy than a great book on healthy foods! There are many books out there to choose from, but here are some of the ELC's favorites:

Growing Vegetable Soup

Author: Lois Ehlert

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Gregory, the Terrible Eater

Author: Mitchell Sharmat

Publisher: Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing

***Eat Your Colors: A Puzzle Book (Sesame Street
Happy Healthy Monsters)***

Author: Sarah Albee & Joe Matthieu

Publisher: Reader's Digest Children's Publishing, Incorporated

Baby Max and Ruby-Shopping

Author: Rosemary Wells

Publisher: Penguin Group (USA)

Chomp and Chew to a Healthy You

Author: Molly Carroll

Publisher: Rourke Publishing LLC

Local Events for the Whole Family!

Celebrate Black History Month with the Library!

Celebrate Black History Month with stories, crafts and more.

When: Tuesday, February 15, 2011

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Where: Miami Springs Branch
700 South Royal Poinciana Blvd. #103
Miami Springs, FL 33166

Ages: Preschool and Toddlers

When: Saturday, February 26, 2011

Time: 3:30 p.m.

Where: Little River Branch
160 N.E. 79 St.
Miami, FL 33138

Ages: Children, Family

Go to www.mdpls.org to find more local library events!

The Scoop on Poop

"Fish do it, frogs do it, pythons, birds and elephants do it..." The Scoop on Poop is a 5,000 square-foot traveling exhibition on what poop is and how animals and humans use it.

When: January 22 through May 8

Time: Exhibit is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Where: Zoo Miami
12400 S.W. 152 St.
Miami, FL 33177

www.zoomiami.org

305-251-0400

Cost: General Zoo Admission: \$15.95 per adult + tax; \$11.95 per child (ages 3-12) + tax; children under age 2 and zoo members will be admitted free of charge. Parking is also free.

Kite Festival at Haulover Park

Kites of all shapes and sizes from around the world will fill the sky for this 18th annual seaside event.

When: February 20, 2011

Time: 12 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Where: Haulover Park
10800 Collins Ave.

Miami Beach, FL 33154

http://www.miamidade.gov/parks/parks/haulover_park.asp

Cost: Festival admission is free. Parking is \$6.00.

Parent Space

The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe would like you, our parents, to have an area in the *Parent Link* newsletter that you can call your own. This space will provide advice, tips, jokes, stories, and/or even job opportunities which local parents may share with each other.

So please don't be shy; send us something you would like to share at info@elcmdm.org. It is important to note that included submissions may be edited for clarity, etc. We look forward to hearing from you.

About the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe

The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe is a nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring high-quality early care and education for children in Miami-Dade and Monroe counties. Through a variety of affordable and innovative early education and voluntary pre-kindergarten programs, the Coalition serves more than 50,000 children ages birth to 12-years-old and their families.

Founded in 2000, the Early Learning Coalition is among 31 similar organizations in the State of Florida established following the enactment of the School Readiness Act, which consolidated Florida's early learning services into one integrated program.