

SPRING 2012

Healthy Weight

INITIATIVE

NEWSLETTER

GOING SCREEN FREE! SCREEN-FREE WEEK APRIL 30-MAY 6

Times have changed and children spend more time engaged in screen time than ever before. Screen time is the amount of time spent in front a screen whether it's a television, computer, or other electronic device such as video games or video music player.

The time a child spends in front of a screen is time that could be spent being physically active instead. Parents and teachers should support a screen free environment as much as possible and provide alternate activities.

Tips to reduce screen time in children:

- Have rules in place about screen time. A few examples are: no television after 7:00pm or no hand held video games at the dinner table.
- Don't use screen time as a punishment or a reward. Going outside to play rather than watching television should never be considered a bad thing.
- Establish "Screen-Free Zones" such as the bedroom and dining room, allowing no screens in these zones.
- Be a good role model for your children and/or students by reducing your screen time. Work with other family and/or staff members so that everyone is being a healthy example.

- When you are spending time in front of the television, take physical activity breaks during commercials and avoid snacking while in front of the television or computer.
- Participate in Screen-Free Week April 30-May 6, 2012. See if you can unplug for seven days. For more details, visit the www.commercialfreechildhood/screenfreeweek.

For more information on strategies to reduce screen time, visit the Let's Move web site at www.letsmove.gov or www.healthychildren.org from the American Academy of Pediatrics.



The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that children under 2 years old not watch any TV and that those older than 2 watch no more than 1 to 2 hours a day of quality programming.

For a healthier child, the AAP recommends that parents create an electronic-media-free environment in children's bedrooms.

GET READY FOR THE FIRST-EVER NATIONAL BIKE TO SCHOOL DAY

Schools around Alabama will join children from around the globe to participate in the first-ever National Bike to School Day on Wednesday, May 9, 2012. National Bike to School Day is an event designed to address the issues of physical activity, safer communities, and environmental health. You and your students are invited to get out your bicycles, helmets, and walking shoes and join others in this event by having your school and/or after-school participate.

The National Bike to School Day event is part of a larger initiative called Safe Routes to School (SRTS). SRTS engages young students in active transportation such as biking, walking, and in-line skating as a healthy, sustainable way to get around.

On Wednesday, May 9th, students across the country will bike to school to start their day in a healthy way. Bike to School Day encourages an active trip to school with a focus on the bicycle; however, this event is not limited to this mode of transportation. Just as bicyclists are a part of many Walk to School Day events, walkers can be an important part of Bike to School Day. Studies have repeatedly demonstrated the positive effects that daily physical activity has on improving self-esteem and academic achievement. With reports of obesity on the rise, it is crucial that we help our children establish healthy habits that will last a lifetime.

Visit www.walkbiketoschool.org for resources and lots of event ideas. This website contains a ton of information to help promote biking and walking throughout the year. You can also register for your school to win a free bike rack if you host a bike to school event.

For more information on the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program, please contact Adrinda Carter at adrinda.carter@adph.state.al.us or 334-206-5137.



TEN TIPS TO KEEP FAMILIES FIT IN 2012 FROM THE ALLIANCE FOR A HEALTHIER GENERATION

Helping families get and stay healthy isn't always easy. It's tough to get away from the television and computer screens and find places to get active together. The start of the new year is the perfect time to make a plan! Here are ten tips from the Alliance for a Healthier Generation to help your communities' families get active in 2012.

1. **Walk the Walk:** Eat dinner as a family, and then go for a walk together. If the weather isn't cooperating take the family for a brisk walk around the nearest mall.
2. **Game of the Week:** Spend a Saturday or Sunday afternoon visiting an indoor or outdoor pool, skating rink or basketball court at a local gym, school, or community center.
3. **Break it Up:** You don't have to do it all at once. Look for opportunities to get moderate and vigorous activity for 10 or 15 minutes several times throughout the day.
4. **Form a Team:** Sign up for a family fun run, fun walk or car wash.
5. **Pre-Screening:** Have kids pick their favorite shows each week. Turn on the TV just for those shows, and then turn it off afterwards.
6. **Sign Up:** Buy a family membership at the neighborhood recreation center, YMCA or health club.
7. **Ask for a Lesson:** Sign the family up for dancing, gymnastics, martial arts, fencing or swimming lessons—anything that will get the family excited about staying active.
8. **Tackle Chores:** Do housework or yard work together.
9. **Unglue Yourself:** Kids won't like cutting back on screen time if they see parents as the family couch potato. The best way to influence their behavior is to set a good example.
10. **It's a Family Affair.** Talk about how EVERYONE in the family is going to work together to get healthier. Children should not be the only ones making changes.

The Alliance for a Healthier Generation:

- **Supports** more than 12,000 schools and the lives of more than 7.5 million students through its Healthy Schools Program
- **Activates** more than 2.5 million teens and tweens to commit to eat better, move more and serve as leaders to their peers
- **Facilitated** an 88 percent reduction in beverage calories shipped to schools between 2004 and 2009 through a groundbreaking agreement with the beverage industry

For more information, contact Penny Edwards at penny.edwards@healthiergeneration.org or visit www.HealthierGeneration.org.

MAY IS ASTHMA AWARENESS MONTH

May is Asthma Awareness Month. Asthma affects as many as seven million children in the United States. One out of every 10 school age children have asthma. It is a chronic disease caused by inflammation of the airways in the lungs. During an asthma attack, the muscles around the airway constrict, lining of the air passages swell, and lungs produce excess mucus making breathing very difficult. This can feel like trying to breathe through a pinched straw.

Symptoms can range from mild to severe and varies by person. The most common symptoms are coughing, wheezing, and shortness of breath, restlessness, sleepiness or confusion.

A person with asthma may have symptoms after exposure to certain triggers. Common triggers are pollen, second-hand tobacco smoke, animal dander, mold, dust mites, pests (cockroaches and rodents), and indoor and outdoor air pollutants. Some of these triggers are easy to eliminate from your environment:

1. Make your home and vehicle smoke free.
2. Wash bed linens in hot water once a week, use mattress and pillow covers, and remove stuffed animals from the child's bed to reduce dust mite allergies.
3. Clean up mold you can see with soap and water.
4. Fix water leaks.
5. Maintain your home's humidity level.
6. Remove pets from inside the home or remove them from the bedroom if you or your child is allergic to animal dander.

Children with asthma or other respiratory conditions may encounter triggers on school grounds or inside the classroom. The Alabama Asthma Program promotes three programs that help schools reduce asthma triggers: No Idling campaign, Tools for Schools program, and the Air Quality Flag program. The No Idling campaign provides signs and education to encourage drivers not to idle their vehicles outside of a school for more than five minutes. The exhaust fumes from idling vehicles can make their way into the school's classrooms through the ventilation system. The Tools for Schools program helps schools identify indoor air problems and develop effective indoor air quality management techniques. Finally, the Air Quality Flag program uses color coded flags to help students and staff prepare for high pollution days using ground level ozone and particulate matter (particles found in haze, smoke, and dust) measures. When levels of these pollutants are high adults and children are more likely to have symptoms. For more information about these programs visit the Alabama Department of Public Health website at www.adph.org/asthma or call 1-800-252-1818.

There are several educational games and websites for children to learn more about their asthma and asthma triggers:

- <http://asthma.starlight.org> (Asthma game: Quest for the Code)
- www.kidshealthgalaxy.com (Children's Hospital of Philadelphia)
- www.airnow.gov/kids (Environmental Protection Agency)
- www.smogcity2.org (interactive air pollution simulator)
- www.bam.gov (Centers for Disease Control)

SAVE THE DATE! JULY 27, 2012

It's time for the 8th Annual Healthy Weight Initiative Workshop hosted by the Nutrition and Physical Activity Division of the Alabama Department of Public Health. Make plans to attend this free workshop on Friday, July 27, 2012 in Clanton, AL.

Presentations on a variety of current nutrition and physical activity topics will be showcased along with innovative practices that promote better health in children and their families. Resources and tools for implementation will be highlighted throughout the day.

For more information call Molly Killman at 334-206-5646 or email at molly.killman@adph.state.al.us.

GOING WILD IN THE FOREST

Workshops with Project WILD & Project Learning Tree Activity Guides! Sponsored by the Alabama Wildlife Federation and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

Educators who would like to learn a wide variety of environmental education activities directly connected to Alabama's wildlife and forests will find this workshop highly beneficial.

Complete this one-day workshop to receive BOTH the Project WILD and the Project Learning Tree Activity Guidebooks! Workshop is Free (Lunch \$10 - collected on site)

When and Where:

This workshop will be at six different locations across Alabama:

- Tuesday, April 24 - Lawrence County Extension Office in Moulton
- Wednesday, April 25 - Etowah County Extension Office in Gadsden
- Thursday, April 26 - North Shelby County Library at the Alabama Green Industry Training Center, Birmingham
- Tuesday, May 1 - Alabama Wildlife Federation Headquarters in Millbrook
- Wednesday, May 2 - Turtle Point Nature Center in Flomaton
- Thursday, May 3 - Landmark Park in Dothan

What time: 8:30 am - 3:00 pm

Healthy Weight Initiative
Alabama Department of Public Health
The RSA Tower
201 Monroe Street, Suite 710
Montgomery, AL 36130



NEWS AND EVENTS

DIABETES AND OBESITY CONFERENCE: STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY LINKS TO ADDRESS DIABETES AND OBESITY

Make plans to attend the Diabetes and Obesity Conference to increase awareness of the growing problem of obesity and its relationship to diabetes in children and adults. Participants will learn about resources, tools, and data that will be useful for planning, implementing and evaluating interventions in their communities. To register for the conference, visit www.aces.edu/diabetesconf.

Where: Embassy Suites Hotel and Conference Center,
300 Tallapoosa St., Montgomery

When: April 22-24, 2012

NATIONAL WALK@LUNCH DAY

Blue Cross Blue Shield is hosting its annual National Walk@Lunch Day. Local Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies, businesses large and small and state legislatures across the nation will encourage employees to wear comfortable shoes and take a walk at lunch.

Schools also are encouraged to participate in National Walk@Lunch Day by setting personal goals for students and teachers, and incorporating walking into the school day as a first step toward long-term prevention of health problems for future generations. For more information visit, www.bcbs.com.

When: April 25, 2012

Where: Linn Park, Birmingham

What time: 10:30am – 1:30pm

FOURTH ANNUAL WOMEN'S HEALTH 5K RUN AND 1 MILE MOTHER-DAUGHTER WALK - WOMEN ON THE MOVE TO IMPROVE WOMEN'S HEALTH

This event is sponsored by the Office of Women's Health Advisory Committee in partnership with St. Vincent's Health System. This 5K Run and 1 Mile Mother-Daughter Walk is designed to empower women to make their health a top priority, increase the awareness of women's health issues and highlight resources that are available for health and wellness for women in the state of Alabama. A portion of the proceeds from this event will be used to sponsor selected girls participation in the 2012 Fall Girls on the Run Program. Families are invited to attend to support the health of women across Alabama. For more information, visit www.adph.org/owh.

When: May 19, 2012

Where: Homewood High School,
1901 South Lakeshore Drive, Homewood

What time: Late Registration 7:00am
Run/Walk 8:00am, Awards 9:30am

OBESITY TASK FORCE

Attend the State Obesity Task Force meeting to network with partners from across the state working on preventing and reducing obesity in adults and youth. Learn about programs and strategies that create healthier lifestyles and environments. Task force meetings are open to the public.

Visit www.adph.org/obesity to learn more about the State Obesity Task Force.

When: May 31, 2012

Where: Alabama Power Company, Clanton

What time: 9:00am until noon