

Healthy Decisions



ILLUSTRATION BY CAROL PORTER—THE WASHINGTON POST

INSIDE**7** Better Safe Than Sorry**13** Nutrition Quiz**16** Healthy Living Inventory**20** Food Intelligence

An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

A Word About Healthy Decisions

This guide is the first of two guides on being fit. We focus on safety during athletic activities, concepts of good nutrition and actions to improve fitness. The activities and articles also prepare your students for the next guide that will be closely tied to *The Post* series, "The Obesity Epidemic: Young Lives at Risk," that begins on May 18.

What better time to address health. May is National Physical Fitness and Sports Month. As the days get warmer and longer, the cries of neighborhood children playing outside can be heard more frequently. It is also the time when many unnecessary accidents take place. "On the School Field, Better Safe Than Sorry" and "No One Kind Fits All" stimulate discussion and suggest actions to take.

Armed with vocabulary (calories, grams, fiber, carbohydrates, potassium, mono-unsaturated), results from a nutrition quiz, and an understanding of what nutrients students in their age group require, students are urged to examine their school lunch offerings, educate their fellow students and talk to their parents about the meals and snacks that they eat. We also look at the role of research groups, legislators and school officials in providing healthy choices.

The Washington Post NIE Program wants to be part of your students' health and wellness education. Use the resources and suggested activities in this guide to help your students to be better informed about nutrition, safety and making healthy decisions.

Lesson: Staying safe and keeping fit requires healthy decisions about the foods you eat, the exercise you get and the precautions you take.

Level: Mid to high

Subjects: Health, Physical Education

Related Activity: Art, Journalism, English, Government

NIE Online Guide
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Contributing to this guide: *Post* Deputy Metro Editor Lynn Medford and writers of articles that will appear in the childhood obesity series are collaborating on this and the next guide to provide teachers with resources to use with and for their students.

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Healthy Decisions

Play It Safe

Before reading “On the School Field, Better Safe Than Sorry,” find out if students have had sprained ankles, knee injury or broken arms and legs. How did they know they were injured? What was done to care for them and how long did it take to heal? Were any of these sports-related?

Wellness columnist Howard Schneider focuses on male and female student athletes. Although he refers to fall sports, concepts apply to other sports. Questions for discussion include:

- Who is Schneider’s intended reader?
- What argument is given for staying active all year round?
- Why is a swollen joint in a student a “very big deal”?
- What causes the injury that has occurred four to six times more in female athletes than male athletes?
- How can one prevent ACL injury?
- What are the signs and effects of dehydration?

Encourage students during recess, PE or on their own to practice the Single Leg Hop and Hold. What exercises can be done while students are seated in their desks? (Think about the directions given on long flights.)

Study the informational graphic, “Protecting the Growth Plate.” Distinguish the growth plate, cartilage and articular cartilage.

Discuss the importance of warm-up exercises. Invite a coach or school nurse to talk about and illustrate this topic.

Select a Helmet

Before reading this Health section article, find out what students know

about helmets. Take an informal survey: How many students own a helmet? When do they wear it? Do any own more than one helmet? How many? For mathematics application, compile the data and ask students to create a chart.

Read and discuss the article, “No One Kind Fits All.” Questions include:

- What damage can result from head trauma?
- How many people are killed each year in bike-related crashes?
- What age group is most at risk of bike accidents? How many students have had minor bike accidents? (Note your survey of how many wear a helmet while riding a bike.)
- Why doesn’t one helmet fit the needs of all sports?

Read and study “Helmet Types.” This informational graphic illustrates four types of helmets. Ask students to select one of these helmets or one that they wear for a sport. Draw it and add decorations or decals. Add informational text to explain the benefits of the helmet. You may allow or encourage students to add features that they think would make the helmet safer for a particular sport. Display the helmets in the classroom or a school display case.

Read “Suggestions for Picking the Right Helmet.” Use the second bulleted item to conduct interviews with coaches (school teams, extracurricular) and to review information on Web sites.

Take a Nutrition Quiz

This quiz will appear in *The Washington Post* series on

On the Web

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/sportssafety.html

Sports Safety

National Institute of Health resources and links cover many sports — range from bike safety tips to tips to prevent volleyball and yoga injuries. A great beginning place to locate reliable information and recent studies.

www.astm.org

ASTM International

Originally the American Society for Testing and Material, ASTM works toward international standards. Search “helmets” for many links.

www.nocsae.org

National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment

News and research, injury data and information on athletic and sports medicine

www.smf.org

Snell Memorial Foundation

Helmet safety standards by sport and testing information

www.usa.safekids.org

Safe Kids, USA

Since 1988 Safe Kids has been promoting prevention measures. These include “Walk This Way,” “Ready to Roll,” and “Fire.” National Safe Kids Week is April 26-May 4.

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childhood obesity that begins on May 18, 2008. In preparation for the series, you might explain each nutrient and discuss the need for them (calcium, magnesium, potassium and fiber) in the diet. Bring to class an apple (fiber and potassium), banana (potassium), carrot (vitamin A), orange (vitamin C), peanut butter (protein) to explain why they are good for lunch and snacks.

Teachers may wish to give this quiz with some illustrations — either tangible or photographs. For example, for question #3, have some sunflower seeds, broccoli and peanuts for students to sample. For question #14, you might have some of each fruit that could be cut up and served alone or in a fruit salad. You might serve popcorn while students are taking the quiz and discuss its benefits when reviewing the answer to #16.

Be sure students can take home the quiz to share with their parents.

Observe School Fundraisers

Two articles that focus on food decisions made by Montgomery County Public Schools and Virginia public schools are included in this guide. "Study Looks at Schools' Food Values," covers a Center for Science in the Public Interest report. MCPS officials have been encouraged to ban fundraisers that promote fast food, candy and other low-nutrition items. After discussing the article's content, you may consider:

- To what extent does your school offer similar promotions that the study recommends banning?
- Would your students favor such a ban?

- What supplies, equipment and programs have such fundraisers provided for your school?
- What alternatives are available that might promote better nutrition decisions?

Observe School Lunches

"Va. Senate Backs Phaseout of Trans Fats in School Food" reports on a legislature's involvement in improving the food provided in school lunches. Virginia students may research to find out if the Va. House of Delegates supported this legislation. Discussion could include:

- What role should state legislators play in school food decisions? Why?
- Should school boards, PTAs and/or student councils get involved in food lunch, bake sale and vending machine offerings in elementary, middle and high schools?
- Why is attention given to trans fat consumption?
- What foods in your school cafeteria contain trans fat?

Students may do a study or rating of the school's menu items. After collecting the data, they should write an article with informational graphic for the school newspaper or PTA newsletter.

Students might identify an area of nutritional concern in their school. Interview administrators, health advocates and others to learn more. Write an editorial or letter to the editor in which a plan is given or stand is taken. Perhaps, your school is doing well in providing healthy food options. Write in praise of this action.

Teachers may wish to review the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine school

Fitness Online

www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/health/fitness/exercises/

Exercise Demonstrations

Read the steps and watch them in action. Exercises for beginners and the advanced: upper and lower body, stretching and core exercises

www.shapeup.org/publications/99.tips.for.family.fitness.fun/

Shape Up America

Tips for Family Fitness Fun for the home, school, backyard — even rainy days. Check the homepage for Childhood Obesity and 10,000 Steps as well as Resource and Support centers.

www.physicalfitness.org

National Association for Health and Fitness

Promotes Employee Health Day, physical fitness, sports and healthy lifestyles

www.fitness.gov

President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports

President's Challenge activities, toolkit and resources for health, physical activity and sports

www.athletes.com

Winning is Everything

An athletic training site with warm-ups, exercises and ways to improve skills in many sports. Includes nutrition guides.

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lunch report cards. Fairfax and Montgomery county schools are included. Much can be gained from reviewing their criteria of evaluation.

Make Comparisons

"It's in the Numbers" provides students with comparisons of calorie and fat content of food choices. After explaining calories and the different types of fat (trans fat, saturated, unsaturated), also explain the importance of knowing sugar and sodium content. Discuss each of the cards. Jane Black prepared the content of the cards for *The Washington Post* childhood obesity series.

Give students the assignment to create more flash cards. You may wish to include sodium and sugar content in the comparison.

Students could generate a list of foods or teachers may have a list from which to select. Include items that appear regularly in your school cafeteria. Students may begin with one of the two items and have to come to the next class period with their pair for their teacher's approval. This approach may result in conversations at home about the foods that one elects to eat.

Students will do the research, write and illustrate a card for presentation and posting. One excellent resource is the USDA database. Many of the fast food companies have menu and nutrition data on their Web sites.

The end-of-project display may be either for the classroom or in a school display case. See *Museum Musings* for how to create a display (www.washpost.com/nie).

Read About Food

Read and discuss "Food Intelligence." Health and Nutrition columnist Sally Squires provides food options for three areas: pizza selection, snacks and cereal choice. Divide the class into three groups, one for each area. Before giving each group the appropriate Squires' Food Intelligence report, have them brainstorm "best choices" for pizza at home, snacks for kids and teens, and hot or cold breakfast cereal.

If you have access to the Internet, each group could do some research based on their Top Ten Best Choices. Each group will prepare their list. Have them compare and contrast their list to the Lean Plate Club ones. Have they found any healthier alternatives?

If you tie this activity with the series that begins on May 18, *The Post* will have daily food intelligence components to support it. These will be keyed to the Web where there will be an interactive supermarket.

Take Inventory

Get a sense of your students' lifestyle that influences their health. "Healthy Living Inventory" is provided to survey the areas of sleep, nutrition and exercise. After students take the inventory, tally the responses. Include math application by giving students different answers to tabulate and prepare a chart or graph of the data.

The prompts in the second portion of the inventory, give students an opportunity to focus on one area of health influence and decision-making. These areas will be given more attention in *The Post* series on childhood obesity. This activity will prepare students to compare their profile and positions with those presented in the series. ■

Eat Well

www.nutrition.gov

Nutrition

USDA Nutrient Database, Smart Nutrition 101, Dietary Guidelines for Americans, Weight Management, news briefs, studies and many other resources

www.kidshealth.org/kid/

Kids Health for Kids

Many topics include injuries, staying healthy and growing up. Movies, games, quizzes and answers to questions. Start with Mission Nutrition.

www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org

Montgomery County (Md.)

Public Schools

Parent Resources include menus and nutrition/allergy information.

www.fcps.org

Fairfax County (Va.) Public Schools

Energy Zone features include lunch menus, Web-based Nutrition Calculator, "Give Me 5! Colors that Jive!" to promote fruit and vegetable consumption, and vegan options.

healthyschoollunches.org/reports/index.html

Healthy School Lunches

Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine's evaluation of the school lunch menus offered by the nation's largest school districts

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ANSWERS: Nutrition Quiz

1. They all do. Calcium not only helps build and maintain bones, but this essential mineral maintains heart health, controls blood pressure and a host of other key functions.
2. False. Studies show that adults serve more food than children need. Best to let kids serve themselves to help them learn not to overeat. And skip making them clean the plate, since that teaches them to ignore their own feelings of feeling full.
3. B, sunflower seeds; D, broccoli; E, dry roasted peanuts; and G, tomato sauce. Other good sources: vegetable oils, nuts, green leafy vegetables and fortified cereals. (Sources: Office of Dietary Supplements; 2005 DG Advisory Committee Report).
4. D. Studies show it takes an average of seven or more tries for children to like a new food. The more you offer it, the more likely they are to accept it.
5. E. Men need about 420 milligrams of magnesium daily; women about 320 milligrams; children 9 to 13 years of age need 240 milligrams daily; boys 14 to 18 need 410 milligrams; girls the same age need 360 milligrams.
6. C. About a third of daily calories need to come from healthy fat; 20 percent from protein and the rest from healthy carbohydrates.
7. B, the same amount recommended for adults. Both boys and girls, 12 to 19 years, eat about 36 percent of calories as fat, according to federal food surveys, which may help account for the growing childhood obesity epidemic. One gram of fat has more than twice the calories as a gram of carbohydrates or protein.
8. A, B, F and H. Two percent milk sounds skinnier than whole milk, but has nearly the same amount of fat. Choose skim or 1 percent instead. Butter contains saturated fat. One egg yolk provides about a day's worth of cholesterol. Deep fat fried foods often contain unhealthy trans fat and saturated fat.
9. J, all of the above. Look on nutrition facts labels for fat content. Foods with less than 3 grams of fat per serving are considered low fat.
10. False. Most children and adults can get the nutrients they need from food, according to a conference convened by the federal Office of Dietary Supplements. The conference concluded that there is not enough evidence to recommend for or against taking a daily multivitamin.



BY CAROL PORTER—THE WASHINGTON POST

- If you do use dietary supplements, choose products that provide less than 100 percent of the Daily Value of ingredients to avoid toxic doses and keep all multivitamins out of reach of children, who may see them as candy. Some children have accidentally ingested toxic levels of iron from vitamin pills left open by adults.
11. B, C and E. Making fruit and vegetables readily available when kids are hungry and showing that you eat these foods too is the most effective way to boost consumption. Salsa, hummus and other bean dip and tomato soup all count as vegetables.
 12. B. 1.5 cups daily is equal to eating about six baby carrots, 1 cup of tomato soup and 1 bean burrito.
 13. C. 1.5 cups. Not only do kids usually like fruit better than vegetables, but it also packs potassium, vitamin C and many other phytonutrients.
 14. G. All of the above.
 15. B. At least half of all grains should be whole grains, according to the latest U.S. Dietary Guidelines.
 16. All but B, the slice of multigrain bread, which is not a whole grain unless it lists whole wheat or other whole grain flour as the main ingredient.
 17. D and E. Unless they're 100 percent juice, fruit beverages can often contain as much added sugar as soft drinks. Commercially prepared fruit yogurts nearly always have added sugar.
 18. False. While some scientists feared that high fructose corn syrup might behave differently than other sugars in the body, current research suggests that it is metabolized identically to other sugars. In any case, limit consumption of all added sugars whenever possible, according to the U.S. Dietary Guidelines. Soft drinks, which are mostly sweetened with high-fructose corn syrup, provide about 33 percent of added sugar in the diet, according to the U.S. Dietary Guidelines. Next leading sources of added sugar are candy, cakes, cookies and pies and fruitades and fruit punches.
 19. C. Yes, it seems daunting, but it's easier to meet these goals if you eat plenty of fruit and vegetables, at least three servings daily of whole grains and add beans to your diet. One cup of beans packs about 14 grams of fiber.
 20. C. Use these calories to have "luxury" versions of foods, such as a fatter cut of meat, poultry with the skin or a slice of cake. The more you exercise, the more discretionary calories you can build into your day. But be careful: Just 100 calories too much daily can add up to an extra 10 pounds of weight per year. ■

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THE MISFITS

Howard Schneider

On the School Field, Better Safe Than Sorry

• Originally Published September 4, 2007

Now that summer break is over and the little monsters — er, darlings — are back where they ought to be, make sure you keep an eye on their training for fall sports. The last thing you want is to have them injured and lounging on the couch where they have spent the past three months hollering for food.

Unfortunately, if your kids are loungers, the risk of injury as they get back into high school athletics is higher than for student athletes who stayed active during vacation or had a well-structured preseason (preferably both). The best prevention from the tweaks and tears that can bedevil our soccer, football, cross country and other fall athletes is for them to be in shape before they hit the field.

Regardless of where kids start, local sports medicine pros have a few suggestions to keep the young ones injury-free.

Let's begin with the boys.

My son Jack is 17 and in his senior year of high school, and about the last thing I would have worried about during football training are his "growth plates" — the soft bone ends in children that let the bone expand until it gradually hardens in adolescence. He's taller than I am, can best me on a couple of strength tests, and I would think he is close to being done with his growing.

But here's the thing: I don't know that for sure. Particularly for boys, it is possible for the bone ends to remain soft and open to more growth later than you might expect. Craig Miller, an orthopedic

surgeon and sports medicine specialist at Shady Grove Orthopaedic Associates in Rockville, says that any swollen joint in a teenager should be treated as a warning sign. The type of ankle or knee sprains that adults can ice and wait out might signal injury to a bone that isn't finished developing — and is at risk of stunted growth or deformity if it is put under further stress.

If the swelling does not go away in a day or two, see a doctor, and make sure the exam includes the possibility of growth plate damage. (It may take an MRI or X-ray of the non-injured side of the body to tell if the bone is still soft.)

"Children want to return to athletic participation. If a child is complaining of an injury or if they are limping, if there is a swollen joint, that is something that

should not be ignored," Miller said. "A swollen joint in a child is a very big deal."

For girls playing soccer, basketball or any sport with a lot of lateral motion, knee injuries — and specifically, injuries to the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) — have become a mini-epidemic, occurring at four to six times the rate for male high school athletes.

Researchers now think they know the cause: Female athletes tend to have strength imbalances between their quadriceps and their hamstrings, and also tend to be more stiff-legged in their running and jumping. That combination is disastrous for the ACL, which

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BY JOHN C. GAROFALO

Woodbridge Senior H.S. field hockey players take a water break during practice.

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connects the thigh and shin bones, said Perry Esterson, a physical therapist and sports specialist at Physiotherapy Associates in Fairfax. If the athlete is changing direction or landing from a jump, the quadriceps puts pressure on the ligament; without adequate strength in the hamstring to counteract it, the chance of a tear increases.

If your daughter is a soccer, basketball or lacrosse player, you might consider one of the special "jump training" programs developed to lower the risk of ACL tears among women — or, better yet, see if her coach or school or league is willing to adopt one for all participants.

The Cincinnati SportsMedicine Research and Education Foundation, for example, has developed a six-week sequence to teach women who are not naturally "soft" jumpers how to change their landings so the force is better distributed.

Frank Noyes, president of the foundation, offers a simple test for any concerned parent: Play hopscotch and watch what happens. If your child wobbles on a one-foot landing, or if the leg is straight when she comes down, she is pressuring the ACL.

"If you land with a straight knee, that is dangerous. . . . If you have the knee joint anywhere away from the rest of the body . . . it is going to produce an imbalance," Noyes said. During jump training sessions, "when they land, we don't want to hear them land," but learn instead to flex the knees.

■

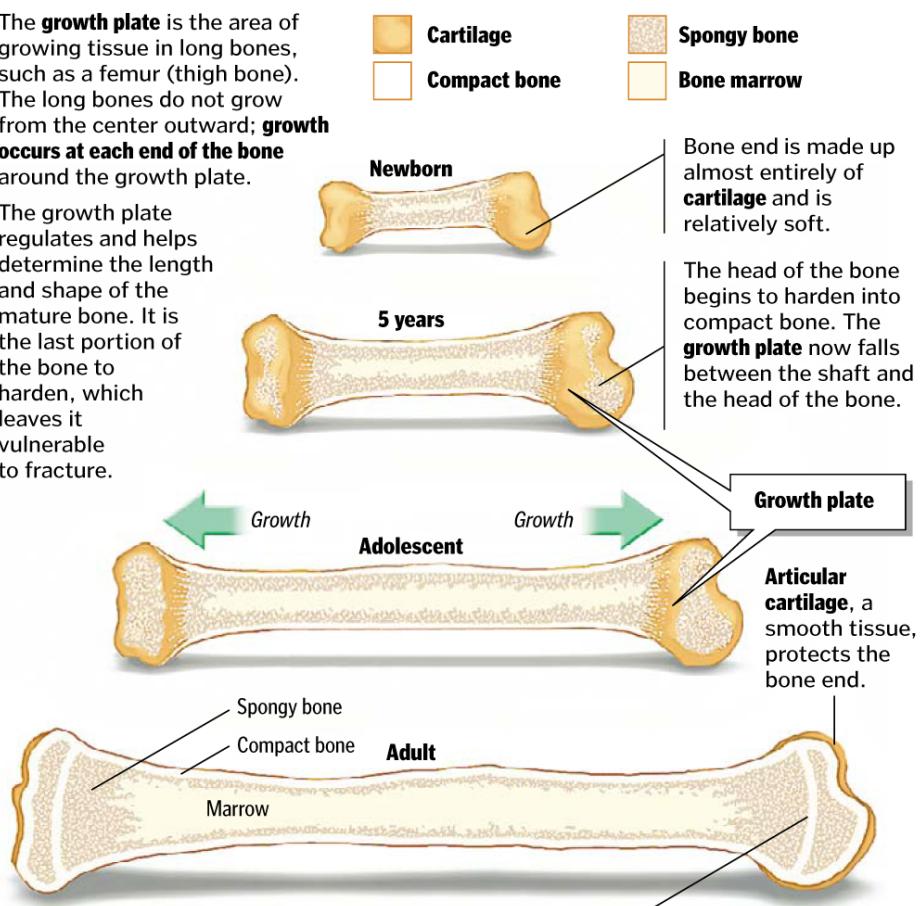
Finally, a no-brainer: hydration. The weather here can be brutal into September, and teams should be given a water break roughly every 15 minutes. In my experience, high school coaches are good on this front. But if you are observing from the sidelines and notice that is not happening, say something.

Protecting the Growth Plate

The growth plate, the weakest area of the growing skeleton, is prone to injury in active children and adolescents. The long-term consequences of injury can include limbs that are crooked or of unequal length.

The **growth plate** is the area of growing tissue in long bones, such as a femur (thigh bone). The long bones do not grow from the center outward; **growth occurs at each end of the bone** around the growth plate.

The growth plate regulates and helps determine the length and shape of the mature bone. It is the last portion of the bone to harden, which leaves it vulnerable to fracture.



By about 18 to 20 years, all parts of the bone have fully hardened; the growth plate forms a line of dense bony tissue.

SOURCES: American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases, University of Glasgow

BY BRENNAN MALONEY AND PATTERSON CLARK — THE WASHINGTON POST

Pay particular attention in humid weather, when sweat still robs the body of water and salt but cools less well because it can't evaporate as readily. Dehydration during a workout can lead to cramps, headaches and dizziness tied to heat exhaustion, or even heat stroke. If you are in doubt about what's happening, put kids on the scale. If they weigh in at 150 in the morning and are down to 148 after practice, they will need to knock down about two pints of

water over the rest of the day — roughly a pint per pound. (As teenagers they may not want to talk about this, but, for the record, let them know that if they are properly hydrated their urine will be on the clear side. If it's dark yellow, they need to drink more.)

Yeah, all this precaution and injury-prevention stuff can be a drag. But it's a whole lot better than surgery or weeks of therapy, not to mention better than having them home on the couch. ■

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Family Fun

- Join *The Washington Post* and Mystics for Family Fun Days throughout the season!
Sunday, May 25 — Friday, June 20 — Sunday, July 13
— Sunday, September 14
- *The Washington Post* is one of the sponsors of the D.C. High School Baseball Championship Weekend, May 31.
- Get \$5 off Nationals home games on any Wednesday — if you bring *The Washington Post* masthead from that day to the ballpark.

Read *The Washington Post* Sports section and KidsPost for other events.

WASHINGTON POST
Wednesdays

Get \$5 off Nationals tickets
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Here's how!

Get *The Washington Post* on any home-game Wednesday... Tear off the masthead including the day and date... Redeem at the box office that day for your \$5 savings!... Enjoy great Nationals action!

On tickets priced \$24 and up. Day of game only. Two ticket maximum per person. No photocopies of masthead.

Masthead

The Washington Post

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Walk a Mystics Mile and More



AP PHOTO/DOUG MILLS

The Mystics in Training program is designed to get children in fourth and fifth grades moving. It is a year-long program that follows the children's fitness progress. The program includes the Mystics Mile, where the children walk at least a mile with their teachers as well as follow lesson plans focused on nutritional choices. Each month a different "celebrity" walks with the students.

The Mystics believe in creating and supporting school environments in which children can practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors. They achieve this by the Mystics In Training (MIT) program. MIT members are children attending schools in Washington, D.C., Virginia, and Maryland. The results of this program will be used to guide implementation of a nationwide program designed to prevent childhood obesity throughout schools across the country. Children participating in MIT practice healthy eating habits and participate in daily physical activity. How?

- Provide reinforcement and access to fruits and vegetables, water instead of sweetened drinks, and 60 minutes of daily physical activity.
- Teachers have access to relevant best practices and materials associated with obesity prevention.
- Parents are given resources and participate in activities to support their child's healthy behaviors.

Lower the Risk of ACL Tears

The Single Leg Hop and Hold is one of several jumps that the Cincinnati SportsMedicine Research and Education Foundation recommends to help adolescent female athletes overcome imbalances. The athlete starts out on one foot with the knee slightly bent, hops forward as far as possible and successfully lands with knee bent and holds a deep squat position for five seconds.



CINCINNATI SPORTS MEDICINE RESEARCH AND EDUCATION FOUNDATION

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No One Kind Fits All

Experts Say Different Sports Require Different Helmets

BY ELIZA McGRAW
Special to The Washington Post

• Originally Published April 29, 2008

“Don’t forget to wear your helmet,” parents tell their kids now that warmer temperatures are luring them outside to cycle, skateboard, rock climb, kayak and ride horses. And with good reason. “Helmets basically keep your skull from cracking,” says pediatric neuropsychologist Gerard Gioia, director of the Safe Concussion Outcome, Recovery & Education Program at Children’s National Medical Center.

But as the number of outdoor activities continues to add up, so do the helmets meant to protect against head injuries. My family of two adults and two children owns four bike helmets, three horseback riding helmets, three ice hockey helmets and two skateboarding/scootering helmets. We have rented ski helmets, and I will need to send my son to lacrosse camp with a lacrosse helmet this summer. Twelve helmets sure feels like a lot.

Can’t one all-purpose helmet suffice?

In a word, no, say medical experts. That’s because different sports subject the body to different forces from different directions — and sport-specific helmets are designed accordingly.

“If you think about riding a bicycle, people tend to fall off front first, so they are more at risk for the front of their head hitting the ground, or a wall, because they are moving forward,” Gioia says. A bike helmet has frontal protection to guard against this.

“But then you have kids that are on skateboards, and the more typical thing for a skateboard is the skateboard zipping out, and you fall backwards and hit the back of your head.” Skateboard helmets typically cover more of the

skull and the back of the neck than bike helmets.

Head trauma is dangerous because it can cause bleeding, concussion (a jarring brain injury) and seizures, says Gholam Motamed, an associate professor of neurology and director of the epilepsy program at Georgetown University Hospital. “In fact, if there is a piece of bone breaking into the brain, the chances of epilepsy would be as high as 30 to 50 percent,” he says.

Hard-shell, foam-lined sport helmets reduce the risk of injury by absorbing much of the force that, in a fall or collision, would otherwise go directly to the head. The problem has been getting people to use them.

For the 900 or so people killed each year in bike-related crashes, head injury is the leading cause of death. Bike helmets have been shown to reduce the risk of head and brain injury by 85 percent or more. But of the more than 80 million bike riders in this country, approximately 43 percent never use helmets, according to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. Children 5 to 14 are most at risk of bike accidents.

Safe Kids USA, a national coalition working to reduce childhood deaths from accidental injury — the leading killer of children ages 1 to 14 — released a report yesterday showing progress since 1987. A 10-step safety checklist published with the report, available at <http://usa.safekids.org>, reminds parents to make sure “children wear a helmet and other protective gear every time they bike, skate, skateboard, or ride a scooter.”

Since the 1990s, helmet use has become increasingly common in all sports. Twenty-one states (including Maryland) plus the District require cyclists to wear a helmet, according

to Safe Kids USA; Virginia has never passed a bike helmet law, but several Northern Virginia counties, including Fairfax, Arlington and Prince William, require their use by children younger than 15, according to the Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute. At least six states plus the District also require children to wear helmets while using scooters, skates and skateboards. But in some sports, lenient policies still compromise safety.

Drusilla Malavase, a horseback riding helmet expert, is critical of ice skating rinks and riding academies that sometimes let students take introductory lessons in bike helmets because most people already have them at home.

“It is not okay for anyone, especially beginners, to ride horses in bike helmets,” says Malavase, who co-chairs the Equestrian Helmet Subcommittee of the American Society for Testing and Materials, which publishes standards for athletics. “Many of the lower-priced equestrian sport helmets look enough like bike helmets that it isn’t easy to tell the difference from a distance.” However, equestrian helmets have much better mechanisms such as harnesses and chin straps to keep the helmet on and closely fitted to the head, she says.

As demand grows for better protection, helmet design is evolving. For example, says Motamed, study authors who reported on a cheekbone fracture suffered in alpine canoeing suggested that kayak helmet designers might want to incorporate facial protection in their products.

Materials are constantly changing, too. Leather football helmets long ago gave way to lighter, stronger polycarbonate shells. The old equestrian velvet “hard hats” are being replaced by

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high-tech foam versions. Designers and biomechanical engineers are working on helmets with thermoplastic shock absorbers, Gioia says. On impact, these air-based devices may provide more protection by taking more of the force away from the brain.

For now, however, anyone participating in a sport with a risk of head trauma needs to find the best helmet out there for that particular sport. It may mean that you will end up with an entire shelf dedicated to helmets, but the increased safety is worthwhile.

"We parents are paying money for different applications, because there

are different risk profiles with different activities," Gioia says. "It doesn't matter whether it is a recreational kid or a high-level athlete, it is force to the head. I would say to any parent, I would not cross sports with helmets."

Eliza McGraw is a Washington area freelance writer.

HELMET TYPES

Helmets for four popular sports show design differences meant to reduce head-injury risks tied to each activity. Clockwise from top left, a skateboard helmet has a deep back to protect a skater against injury from common backward falls. An equestrian helmet shields the top and sides of a rider's skull from impact in case of falls or kicks from a horse; secure chin straps keep the helmet in place during trots, gallops and jumps. The immersible kayak helmet features secure strapping plus back and side protection against rocks. A bike helmet is designed to take impact from frontward pitches onto hard surfaces.



Skateboarding



Horseback Riding



Cycling



Kayaking

Sketch a Helmet

Draw a helmet that is worn during a sport that you play or attend.

KidsPost Survey

How often do you wear a helmet when cycling? More than 360 readers responded.

All of the time	39.3%
Most of the time	10.8%
Some of the time	9.7%
Rarely or never	32.1%
I don't bike	8.1%

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Suggestions for Picking the Right Helmet

• *Originally Published
April 29, 2008*

With so many look-alike helmets to choose from, how can you tell which will protect you or your child best? Here are some tips from experts.

■ Don't try to buy an all-purpose helmet. Sport-specific helmets best protect against the risks of a given activity. Consider buying a helmet for a particular sport at a store that specializes in that sport.

■ Ask your coaches or instructors which helmets they prefer and why, and which certifications the items carry. Some common certifying groups include the American Society for Testing and Material (for sports including skiing, horseback riding and skateboarding); National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (football, baseball, ice hockey, lacrosse, polo); Snell (cycling); Safety Equipment Institute (horseback riding).

■ Buy a helmet you or your child will wear. Fashion may not affect effectiveness, but it may keep the helmet on your head rather than on the shelf. Particularly for cycling, choose a helmet that motorists will see easily.

■ Make sure your helmet fits snugly, covers the top of the forehead and doesn't slide from side to side or front to back. The helmet should not hinder motion or obscure vision when you



BY ELIZA MCGRAW

Tate Drupa, 2, of Leesburg, wears a bike helmet, designed to protect against injury caused by falling forward.

move your head. Keep chin straps tight; leave a gap of no more than two fingers between the chin and the strap. Don't pitch those little foam inserts that come with the helmet; installing them can lead to a more secure fit.

■ Keep the helmet's proof of purchase. Some brands offer a replacement at a reduced price if the original is damaged.

■ Replace your helmet after a fall if it looks cracked or damaged in any way. Some items, such as hockey helmets,

are designed to sustain multiple blows; bike and equestrian helmets may need replacing after one good fall. See the manufacturer's recommendations.

■ Don't confuse price with safety; you could be paying for details such as leather harnesses or metal fittings.

■ Wear the helmet every time you ride or play. As Mike May of the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association says, "If Lance Armstrong wears one, so should everyone else."

— Eliza McGraw

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Nutrition Quiz

By SALLY SQUIRES

Washington Post Staff Writer

Despite a national obesity epidemic, many Americans routinely fall short on key nutrients though they often eat too many calories. Adults and children are most likely to miss getting enough calcium, magnesium, potassium and fiber, according to the latest Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee. Plus, many adults often skimp on foods rich in vitamins A, C and E.

Could you and your family be missing out? Test your nutrition knowledge with this quiz. Some questions have more than one correct response.

- ____ 1. Eight-year-olds need 800 milligrams of calcium daily. What combinations below meet that goal?
 - A. Two cups of skim milk and 1 ounce of cheddar cheese
 - B. 1/2 cup tofu, 1 cup low-fat chocolate milk and 1/2 cup of calcium fortified orange juice.
 - C. 1 cup of plain nonfat yogurt, 1 cup of nonfat chocolate pudding,
 - D. 1 cup of Total Raisin Bran.
 - E. All of the above.

- ____ 2. Dishing out food to kids, especially young children, helps ensure that they'll get the right portions.
 - A. True
 - B. False

- ____ 3. Vitamin E is important for immunity and helps protect against cancer and heart disease. What foods are vitamin E winners?
 - A. Eggs
 - B. Sunflower Seeds
 - C. Yogurt
 - D. Broccoli
 - E. Dry roasted peanuts
 - F. Meat and poultry
 - G. Tomato sauce

- ____ 4. On average, how many tries does it take for a child to accept the taste of a new food
 - A. Once
 - B. 2-3 times
 - C. 4-6 times
 - D. 7 or more times

- ____ 5. Magnesium helps keep bones strong and is important to control blood pressure and blood sugar levels. Pick the magnesium winners:
 - A. Oatmeal, shredded wheat and nuts
 - B. Raisins, milk chocolate and chocolate milk
 - C. Soybeans, spinach and potatoes
 - D. Brown rice, lentils and kidney beans
 - E. All of the above

- ____ 6. Fat is not a four-letter word. The essential nutrient is important for brain development and for energy in growing children. Children aged 2 to 3 years need to eat what percentage of calories per day of fat?
 - A. 40 to 45 percent
 - B. 35 to 40 percent
 - C. 30 to 35 percent
 - D. 25 to 30 percent
 - E. 20 to 25 percent

- ____ 7. How much fat do those aged 4 to 18 years need daily?
 - A. 20 to 25 percent of daily calories
 - B. 25 to 35 percent
 - C. 35 to 40 percent
 - D. Less than 40 percent

- ____ 8. Both adults and children are urged to limit unhealthy saturated, trans fat and cholesterol in:
 - A. 2% milk
 - B. Butter
 - C. Avocados
 - D. Nuts
 - E. Egg whites
 - F. Egg yolks
 - G. Olives
 - H. Deep-fat fried foods
 - I. Salmon

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- _____ 9. Healthy fats — known as polyunsaturated, mono-unsaturated and omega-3 fatty acids — are found in which of these foods?
- Nuts
 - Tub margarine
 - Guacamole
 - Shrimp
 - Salmon
 - Olives
 - Peanut, almond and cashew butter
 - Flax, pumpkin, sesame, poppy and other seeds
 - Olive, canola, sesame, safflower and corn oil
 - All of the above.
- _____ 10. Children — and most adults — need a multivitamin daily to cover the nutritional bases.
- True
 - False
- _____ 11. The most effective ways to get children to eat more fruit and vegetables, which are good sources of potassium and vitamin C, are to:
- Bargain with them for other privileges, such as computer games or watching television.
 - Serve them at every meal.
 - Eat them yourself.
 - Require them to eat at least three bites.
 - Serve them as snacks and as appetizers.
- _____ 12. In 2005, the federal government replaced the 5-A-Day Program with new recommendations for fruit and vegetables. Children aged, 4 to 8 years, need how many servings of vegetables per day?
- 1 cup
 - 1.5 cups
 - 2 cups
 - 2.5 cups
- _____ 13. How much fruit is recommended daily for those 9 to 13 years of age?
- 2.5 cups
 - 2 cups
 - 1.5 cups
 - 1 cup
- _____ 14. Which of these common servings counts as a cup of fruit?
- Six strawberries
 - 1 medium mango
 - 1 apple
 - 50 grapes
 - 1/2 cup raisins
 - 1 large peach
 - 1 large banana
- _____ 15. Whole grains provide fiber and complex carbohydrates that are less likely to raise blood sugar levels. How many servings of whole grains should you eat daily?
- All grains should be whole grains
 - Half of grains should be whole grains
 - One-third of grains should be whole grains
 - One-quarter of grains should be whole grains
- _____ 16. What foods count as a serving of whole grains?
- Three cups of popped popcorn
 - 1 slice of multigrain organic bread
 - 1 mini whole wheat grain bagel
 - 1 buckwheat pancake
 - 1/2 cup of cooked oatmeal
 - 1 small (6-inch) tortilla
 - 1/2 cup of brown rice
 - 2 rye crispbreads
- _____ 17. Which of these foods have added sugar?
- Orange juice
 - Nonfat plain yogurt
 - Raisins
 - Blended fruit-flavored nonfat yogurt
 - Cranberry juice cocktail
 - Shredded wheat
- _____ 18. High fructose corn syrup is a common, sugary ingredient that should be avoided at all costs.
- True
 - False
- _____ 19. Fiber not only helps you feel full with fewer calories, but it can also aid digestion and lower blood cholesterol and blood sugar levels. How much fiber is recommended daily?
- 20 grams for most men and women; 15 grams for teens and 10 grams for children, 4 and older.
 - 25 grams for most men; 20 grams for most women and children four and older.
 - 38 grams for most men, 25 for most women and children, 31 grams for most teen boys and 19 grams for those 1-3 years of age.
- _____ 20. Discretionary calories are the calories that are left over after you've gotten all the nutrients you need daily. How many discretionary calories does the average adult have to splurge on foods with added sugar, fat or alcohol?
- 500
 - 325
 - 265
 - 175
 - 100

It's in the Numbers

Keeping track of certain numbers can help you to be more healthy. Add up the number of grams and calories in the foods you eat.

Counting calories is one way to stay at the best weight for you. A calorie is a unit used to measure energy — whether you burn it for activity or store it for later use. One pound of fat is equivalent to about 3,500 calories.

Fat is important for development of your brain and nervous system as well as to help your body grow. You should get the necessary "good" fat from about 30% of the calories you consume daily.

Low Sugar Isn't the Obvious Choice

Lesson: If you're counting calories, low-sugar or low-fat isn't always the best option. Low-fat recipes might add more sugar for taste.



And low-sugar baked goods can have as much fat or more as regular items. Think carefully about what you want to minimize (sugar for diabetics, calories for dieters) before making a selection.

Starbucks, Key Lime Loaf: 390 calories and 4 grams of saturated fat

vs.

Starbucks, No Sugar Banana Nut Coffee Cake: 480 calories and 4 grams of saturated fat

You Can't Always Trust Your Gut

Lesson: A tuna sandwich or a salad is obviously a better choice than anything with bacon, right? Not necessarily. The mayonnaise in tuna salad pumps up the fat and calories and salad dressings can make fat and calories skyrocket.



Panera Bread, Tuna Salad on Whole Grain: 840 calories, 44 grams of fat

vs.

Panera Bread, Bacon Turkey Bravo: 750 calories, 26 grams of fat

Watch the Calories in the Cup

Lesson: Soft drink consumption has more than doubled since 1971. But research shows that cutting out just one soda per day can reduce a child's risk of obesity by 60 percent. If you must stop at the drive-thru, skip the full-calories sodas for diet soda or, better, water.



McDonald's, hamburger Happy Meal with Sprite: 620 calories, 22 grams of fat
vs.

McDonald's, hamburger Happy Meal with Diet Coke or water: 500 calories, 22 grams of fat

All Fast Food Isn't Created Equal

Lesson: Look alike items can have real differences. A McDonald's McChicken has 1/4 the saturated fat as Wendy's Crispy Chicken, but its Quarter Pounder with Cheese has 36 percent more sodium than Wendy's Single with Everything. If you're eating fast food regularly, do your homework. All the nutritional information is available at company Web sites.



Wendy's, Crispy Chicken Sandwich: 386 calories, 13 grams saturated fat
vs.

McDonald's, McChicken: 360 calories, 3.5 grams saturated fat

Name _____

Date _____

Healthy Living Inventory

- _____ 1. Hours of sleep I get most nights

 - a. Five to six
 - b. Seven to eight
 - c. More than eight
 - d. More than ten
- _____ 2. Meals I eat Monday-Friday

 - a. Breakfast, lunch, dinner
 - b. Breakfast, lunch, snack, dinner
 - c. Lunch, dinner
 - d. Other _____
- _____ 3. Number of times I eat fast food

 - a. Two or more times a week
 - b. Once a week
 - c. Once a month
 - d. Occasionally
 - e. Never
- _____ 4. My favorite snack food is

 - a. Cheese
 - b. Fruit
 - c. Nuts
 - d. Popcorn
 - e. Potato chips
 - f. Waffles
 - g. Other _____
- _____ 4. When I use a vending machine, I select

 - a. Fruit juice
 - b. Ice tea
 - c. Soda
 - d. Water
 - e. Other _____
- _____ 6. When I use a vending machine, the snack I select is

 - a. Candy
 - b. Chips
 - c. Cookies
 - d. Crackers
- _____ 7. Do you or your parents use the school's online menu?

 - a. Daily
 - b. Weekly
 - c. Occasionally
 - d. Never
- _____ 8. Do you check the nutrition labels on foods?

 - a. At least once a week
 - b. At least once a month
 - c. Five or more times
 - d. Never
- _____ 9. Other than in Physical Education class, how often do you exercise?

 - a. Daily
 - b. Four or five times a week
 - c. Once a week
 - d. Hardly ever
 - e. Never
- _____ 10. What is your favorite form of exercise?

 - a. Playing organized team sports
 - b. Shooting hoops
 - c. Swimming
 - d. Riding bicycle
 - e. Running, jogging, walking
 - f. Hiking, camping
 - g. Horseback riding
 - h. Other _____
- _____ 11. How many hours a day do you watch TV?

 - a. None
 - b. One to two hours
 - c. Three to four hours
 - d. More than four hours
- _____ 12. How many hours a day do you play video games?

 - a. None
 - b. One to two hours
 - c. Three to four hours
 - d. More than four hours

Answer one of the following questions on your own paper.

1. Physicians, nutritionists, legislators and many others concerned with childhood obesity have called for healthy changes in food lunches. If you were to improve the food available in your school cafeteria, what would you do?
2. Researchers from the Johns Hopkins Children's Center have concluded that the large number of fast food commercials on Spanish-language television may contribute to the obesity epidemic among Hispanic youth. To what extent do you think TV advertising of fast foods influences the food consumption of all youth? You may wish to observe an hour of weeknight and an hour of Saturday morning TV to conduct an informal survey of commercial content.
3. Models and many popular actresses are thin or waiflike. In contrast, many students are struggling with obesity. If you were to wage an advertising campaign or prepare a Public Service Announcement on "being the right weight for you," who would you select to be your spokesperson? Explain your choice and your approach to such a promotion?
4. What is your philosophy and approach to living healthy?
5. What would motivate you and other youth to follow a more healthy lifestyle that includes wise food choices, exercise and fitness?

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Study Looks at Schools' Food Values

Outside Report Urges Ban on Junk Snacks

BY LORI ARATANI
Washington Post Staff Writer

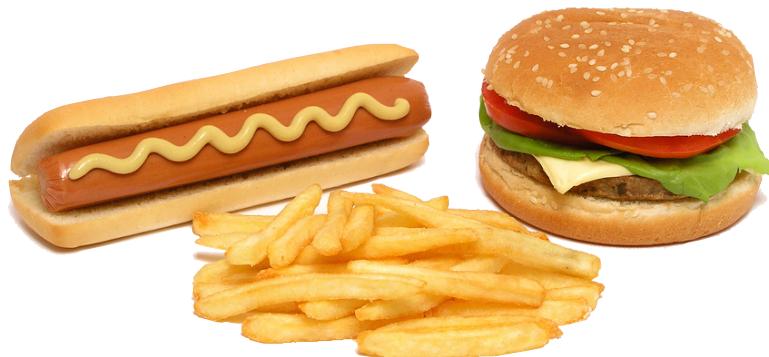
• Originally Published
February 14, 2008

Montgomery County's public schools should ban fundraisers that promote fast food, candy and other low-nutrition items, reestablish its Wellness Committee and strengthen its policy on food and beverage marketing, according to a new report by the Center for Science in the Public Interest.

The report, commissioned nearly two years ago by the County Council at the suggestion of George L. Leventhal (D-At Large), comes as concern is growing over the role schools can play in reducing childhood obesity. Leventhal said the goal of the report was to examine how food is marketed to students in the state's largest school system.

This is the first time an outside group has attempted to evaluate the food-related images that county students see during the school day. The study included a representative sample of 24 elementary schools and six middle and high schools.

Montgomery County school officials, who attended a hearing on the report last month, said they welcome the



BY BIG STOCK PHOTO.COM



BY BILL O'LEARY—THE WASHINGTON POST

report's findings and are moving toward putting into place some of its recommendations.

"We're grateful for the collaborative efforts from the folks here at the table," said school board member Sharon W. Cox (At Large). School officials said they are looking into reestablishing the Wellness Committee, which helped develop a school wellness policy nearly two years ago, as well as other strategies for

promoting healthy life choices among students. The report painted a picture of a system that had made significant gains in offering students smarter food selections but that also could do more to promote better eating habits. As part of the recommendations, school officials are urged to refrain from using the fronts of vending machines for brand-name marketing. Instead, it recommends using images of nutritious food or nonfood images.

Kathy Lazor, director of food and nutrition for Montgomery schools, said at the hearing that a new vending contract calls for contractors to replace images of corporate logos, such as Coca-Cola and Pepsi, with pictures of healthful foods or of people engaged in activities that boost fitness, such as biking and walking.

"Junk food marketing undermines nutrition education in school," said Margo Wootan, director of nutrition policy for the District-based Center for Science in the Public Interest.

The report's authors found that the majority of Montgomery's 200 schools

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had posters and signs that marketed food and beverages. Of those, about 42 percent marketed healthier categories of foods and beverages. But other posters marketed restaurants, prepared foods and soft drinks, the report said.

It also found that high schools had an average of 21 vending machines. Water was the most commonly offered beverage, but the report noted that soda, juice drinks and ice tea were included.

Candy, cookies, crackers and chips were the most commonly found snack foods. The report found that more than 80 percent of the machines had some kind of "brand" marketing on their exteriors. Three years ago, officials established new nutrition standards, limiting the types of beverages and snacks that could be sold during school hours. During the school day, students are permitted to buy only water, 100 percent juice products and juice beverages containing at least 50 percent juice. Students can

purchase so-called "sports drinks," but those machines must be adjacent to physical education facilities. Snack items must also meet certain standards for the amount of fat and sugar.

However, some critics have noted that students still have access to soda and snacks once the school day has ended. "Although MCPS has a strong vending policy, many vending machines contain soda, sweetened teas and drinks, sports drinks, candy, cookies and chips," the report's authors wrote. ■

Have Your Say

After reading "Study Looks at Schools' Food Values," complete one of the following activities.

1. Design the front of a vending machine. The illustration(s) should meet requirements of the new vending contract.

2. Create a poster to promote more healthy food selection.
3. Write a proposal to govern the sale of items, including beverage, food and candy, on your campus before, during and after school.
4. Suggest three items to be sold at your school's concession stand during games. Why would these be healthy and appealing additions?



ILLUSTRATION BY CAROL PORTER

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Va. Senate Backs Phaseout of Trans Fats in School Food

By SANDHYA SOMASHEKHAR
AND ANNIE GOWEN
Washington Post Staff Writers

• Originally Published January 30, 2008

RICHMOND, Jan. 29 — The Virginia Senate voted unanimously Tuesday to phase out the use of artery-clogging trans fats in food sold at public schools, from the cheese pizza in the cafeteria to the chips in the vending machine.

The bill would direct the state superintendent of public instruction to develop guidelines for the elimination of the additive, which has been associated with heart disease, in meals and snacks sold during school hours.

The legislation would not impose a deadline, but lawmakers would follow the issue to ensure that public schoolchildren have healthier food, said Sen. John S. Edwards (D-Roanoke), the bill's sponsor.

"So much of the food children eat is from the school system, so the system ought to be providing nutritious and trans fat-free food," he said.

A similar bill passed the Senate last year but died in a House of Delegates subcommittee.

Trans fats are of concern to nutrition experts because they contribute to artery problems and heart disease. Overweight children are developing signs of heart disease and diabetes at earlier ages, experts say. Trans fats, which can negatively affect cholesterol levels, are often found in margarine and many vegetable shortenings, cookies, chips and fried foods.

Childhood obesity is a growing problem nationally and in the region, experts say.

The prevalence of overweight children ages 6 to 11 more than doubled in the past 20 years, according to the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention, and the rate among 12- to 19-year-olds more than tripled.

Over the past year, dozens of municipalities and school systems across the country have moved to ban or limit trans fats in restaurants and school cafeterias, including in New York and Philadelphia.

The Montgomery County Council approved a trans fat ban last spring. It took effect this month for restaurants, schools and religious institutions and will apply to places offering baked items, other than packaged goods made outside the county, next January.

Kathleen C. Lazor, director of the division of food and nutrition services for Montgomery's public schools, said the system began voluntarily to phase out food with trans fats more than two years ago. The only items that remain on the menu are turkey tenders distributed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The federal government is working with the manufacturer to eliminate trans fats from the breading, she said.

Trans fat policies vary by school district, the School Nutrition Association said. Some say no more than 10 percent of calories over one week of lunch menus should come from trans fat or saturated fat. Others require labeling on menus or

limiting trans fat to no more than 1 gram per serving. Such limits generally apply to an array of foods, including lunches, a la carte items and vending machine products.

Companies that produce food for school systems are gradually responding to such limits, adding trans fat-free chips and other offerings, experts and dieticians said.

Penny McConnell, a registered dietitian and director of food and nutrition services for the Fairfax County public schools, said the system has also been phasing out foods with trans fats in the past 18 months. Five items with trans fat levels above the federal standard of 0.5 grams a serving remain on the menu: the noodles on a Chinese salad, cheese sauce for the high schoolers' nachos, a croissant and two cookies.

She will have to search for replacements for those items if a statewide ban is enacted, she said.

She cautioned that enacting the limits statewide would probably take time, particularly in smaller school districts that have not done much research on the problem. It's sometimes hard to find substitutes that will appeal to the finicky tastes of children and teens, experts say. McConnell recently spent more than

a year, including consulting with students on tasting panels, searching for the right popcorn and low-fat ice cream that would apply to statewide guidelines on fat, sodium and sugar content and appeal to kids.

However, she said, the legislature's move is a positive step.

"It's the right thing to do," McConnell said. She hoped the measure would expand to cover other providers, such as hospitals or colleges, "but this is a good starting point." ■



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LEAN PLATE CLUB

Sally Squires



Food Intelligence

Pizza appeals to all ages. It's a one-dish wonder that can make dinner a snap. But the very ingredients that make pizza so tasty often pack artery-clogging saturated fat, lots of salt and plenty of calories.

To the rescue come a growing number of frozen pizzas that are made with hearty, whole-grain crusts. Some get added flavor from lots of vegetables.

A kid-friendly standout is Earth's Best Whole Grain Cheese Pizza featuring Sesame Street's beloved Elmo on the package, a marketing tool likely to appeal only to the preschool crowd. Half a small pizza has 190 calories and 3 grams of saturated fat. Compare that with DiGiorno Ultimate Oven Fresh Four Cheese Pizza with 320 calories per serving and more than twice the saturated fat.

Several pizzas from Kashi also hit some good nutritional notes. Mediterranean Pizza is topped with spinach, onions and red peppers plus four kinds of cheese.

One-third of a pizza has 290 calories, 9 grams of fat, including 4 grams of saturated fat. The crust is made from seven grains and flaxseed, which provides healthy omega-3 fatty acids, which are good for the heart, brain and joints.

Kashi Tomato Garlic Cheese Pizza has a whole-wheat crust, basil sauce and two kinds of cheese, plus tomatoes. It clocks in at 260 calories per serving. Kashi Roasted Vegetable Pizza

is topped with broccoli, artichokes, onions, garlic and red peppers. A third of a pizza has 250 calories, 9 grams of fat, including 4 grams of saturated fat.

One sour note: Nearly all pizza is high in sodium. Depending on your age, a slice provides 25 to 33 percent of the daily intake for salt. Serve pizza with a big helping of salad or other fresh vegetables. Have fruit for dessert. The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute found that the potassium in produce can help offset some of the blood-pressure raising effects of a lot of salt. ■



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Cereal. More than a quarter of the food ads targeted to children and teens are for breakfast cereal, according to a 2007 Kaiser Family Foundation report. So there is a lot of negotiation between parents and children in the grocery cereal aisles.

The good news is that there are a growing number of healthier options that can please kids and their parents, without taking a big bite out of the weekly budget.

In New England, the Hannaford Bros. grocery chain hired a team of scientists to develop a mathematical formula to rate 27,000 products on its shelves. Products get zero to three "Guiding Stars," based on nutritional content. Kashi Vive Toasted Graham and Vanilla cereal and Post Shredded Wheat are two cereals that earned the top rating of three stars, making them good sources of vitamins, minerals, whole grain and



fiber. They're also low in unhealthy saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, added sodium and added sugars.

Plain Cheerios also scored well by snagging two stars, as did Kellogg's Frosted Mini-Wheats and Cascadian Farms' Clifford Crunch, which contains less than half the sugar and five times

the fiber of better-known Cap'n Crunch. (One surprise: MultiGrain Cheerios have more added sugar than plain Cheerios. And are twice as expensive.)

Other healthier sweet options to start the day include Kashi Honey Puffs, which delivers about half the sugar and twice the fiber of better known — and zero starred — Cocoa Puffs.

Nature's Path Envirokidz Organic Amazon Frosted Flakes provides twice the fiber and half the added sugar of Kellogg's Frosted Flakes. Plus, 1 percent of Envirokidz sales are donated to help endangered species and their habitats.

For good nutrition on a budget, Quaker Instant Oatmeal earned three stars from Hannaford. Or make a big batch of hearty, steel-cut oatmeal on the weekend. Freeze individual portions, then heat in a microwave oven for a fast breakfast during the week. Top with slivered nuts and raisins. Cost: pennies per serving. ■

Snacks are often synonymous with junk food, but they can provide an easy way to boost key nutrients with few food battles.

Start with popcorn. It's a whole grain that few kids can refuse. Try Orville Redenbacher's Original Gourmet Popping Corn. It comes in convenient 100-calorie snack packs and has no artificial colors, flavors or trans fat. How big is a 100-calorie pack? Six cups, with two grams of fat. For the same amount of calories, you get about 16 small pretzels.

Go blue. One choice: Tostitos Blue Corn Organic Natural Tortilla Chips. Their natural blue color is attractive to kids. Plus, they count as a whole grain. Seven chips have about 140 calories and six grams of fat but just half a gram of saturated fat and no trans fat. Team them with bean dip, salsa or guacamole for a



partial serving of vegetables without any coaxing to take three bites. Or mix seasonings into Cabot Fat Free Sour Cream for a quick dip. Two tablespoons have 20 calories.

Get nutty. Nuts are high in protein, pack healthy fat and are a favorite food for all ages. Because they contain about 160 calories an ounce — roughly the amount found in an adult-size handful

— measure nuts into individual plastic bags, ready to grab when hunger strikes. A few good choices: Blue Diamond Salt & Black Pepper Almonds and Planters Lightly Salted Mixed Nuts.

Say cheese! A growing number of low-fat and non-fat options makes cheese a smart choice. Some options: Alpine Lace 25% per packaging Reduced Fat Swiss Cheese provides 20 percent of the daily calcium intake for 70 calories per slice and three grams of saturated fat.

Waffle a little. The large number of frozen waffles means there's no need to get a waffle iron. Your toaster or microwave will do fine. Earth's Best Organic Mini Waffles feature the Cookie Monster, sure to be a hit with preschoolers and their parents. Each serving has 20 calories. Top with a dollop of fat-free yogurt and some fruit for a special afternoon snack treat — or a great breakfast. ■

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Academic Content Standards

This lesson addresses academic content standards of Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia.

Maryland

Biology: Recognize food as the source of materials that all living things need to grow and survive. (Expectation 3.1, Grade 4)

Biology: Describe what happens to food in plants and animals:

- Contributes to growth
- Supports repair
- Provides energy
- Is stored for future use
- Is eliminated

(Expectation 3.1, Grade 4)

Biology: Cite evidence from research and observations that organisms that eat plants or animals break down what they have consumed (food) to produce the materials and energy they need to survive or store for later use. (Expectation 3.1, Grade 7)

Virginia

Health: The student will explain that health habits impact personal growth and development. Key concepts/skills include

- a) food and beverage choices based on nutritional content;
- b) the benefits of physical activity and personal fitness;
- c) safe and harmful behaviors;
- d) positive interaction with family, peers, and other individuals. (3.1, Grade 3)

Health: The student will demonstrate responsibility for developing personal health habits and practicing behaviors that promote an active, healthy lifestyle. Key concepts/skills include

- b) the connection between nutritional guidelines and weight management;
- d) the importance of exercise and recreation;
- e) the effects of personal health habits on cardiovascular fitness;
- f) the importance of developing and maintaining a positive self-image. (5.2, Grade 5)

Washington, D.C.

Science, Life Science: Humans have a variety of mechanisms to stay healthy. (3.7, Grade 3)
As a basis for understanding this concept,

- Explain that eating a variety of healthy foods and getting enough exercise and rest help people stay healthy.
- Recognize that food provides energy as well as materials for growth, maintenance, and repair of body parts.
- Recognize that vitamins and minerals are substances required by the body in small amounts to synthesize essential substances and carry out essential processes.
- Describe how, as a person matures, the amounts of food and exercise needed by the body change.

Science, Life Science: All organisms need energy and matter to live and grow. (4.7, Grade 4)

The Maryland Voluntary State Curriculum Content Standards can be found online at <http://mdk12.org/assessments/vsc/index.html>.

Standards of Learning currently in effect for Virginia Public Schools can be found online at www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Superintendent/Sols/home.shtml.

Learning Standards for DCPS are found online at www.k12.dc.us/dcps/Standards/standardsHome.htm.