



The Complete Health and Wellness Newsletter - Serving ProHealthNet Clients

Parents: Don't Make Your Kids Pay for Dinner!



It's been a full day at the office, you're driving home from soccer practice with the children, and you realize you have nothing to prepare for dinner. You still need to stop for gas, so adding the grocery store to your list of on-the-way-home stops is not so appealing. Wouldn't it just be easier to "make a run for the border"—or better yet, you spy the golden arches 2 blocks away. The question you ask yourself is, "Can I afford the time and energy to make a healthy dinner on days like this?"

Stop. Back-up. You should be asking yourself, "Can I afford not to?" Is this busy life worth sacrificing your most precious asset, the health of your family, your children? Busy, active lifestyles are the norm today. We cannot deny that. However, let's not limit our food options to which drive-thru window we'll visit tonight – in the end, our children will pay for it.

81% of children aged 2 to 9 consume diets that need *substantial* improvements according to USDA research (USDA, Center for Nutrition Policy). More than 30% of toddlers under two consume *zero* servings of fruits and vegetables per day. Adolescents eat one third of all meals away from home. Eating fast food significantly reduces a child's daily servings of fruit, vegetables, and milk. Additionally, restaurant portions are two to eight times larger than standard servings. Because kids are growing, it's especially important that children are given ad-

equated diets to supply their nutritional needs.

Calcium, iron, zinc and Vitamin A are the nutrients that most often fall below recommendations.

About 64% of adults in the United States are overweight or obese. Approximately 22% of children and adolescents are overweight; up to 13% are obese (CDC 1999-2000 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey).

These numbers have increased dramatically in

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Special Children's Issue:

This issue of *Precision Fit* is dedicated to the health and wellness of children. The professionals at *ProHealthNet* would like to assist you in your efforts to promote healthy lifestyles for those precious little ones in your life.

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the past decade and continue to rise. Overweight kids face future health problems including but not limited to high cholesterol, high blood pressure, heart disease, cancer, and joint and bone problems. Type II Diabetes, which once showed up mainly in middle aged adults, is now showing up in children and teens. More than one in three children are being diagnosed prior to their teen years, compared to a mere 4% (one in 16) in 1990.

Overweight kids are likely to enter puberty too early, developing acne, body hair and breasts years sooner than normal. It doesn't stop there. These kids can begin growth spurts too soon, causing them to grow tall in elementary school but fail to grow more in high school. The result is an overall shorter stature. The list continues, with concerns over irregular menstrual cycles, ovarian cysts, and infertility for girls. Finally, the psychosocial and

ProHealthNet

Managing Editor: Doug Booster

Contributors:

Dr. Ricky Virk
Dr. Jon Hammermeister
Dr. Ed Heath
Frank Wu

Please direct subscription inquiries to:
ProHealthNet
PO Box 666
Bend, OR 97709
541-389-9197

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emotional effects associated with body image and self-esteem cannot be overlooked. These effects can lead to eating disorders, nutrient deficiency, size discrimination and self-hatred.

Cha-ching. Can you afford it? Is it worth it to make them pay? It's not too late to make some changes, to put your kid's health and yours back on the priority list. Even small changes can make big differences over time. Here are some ideas to help you get started. Instead of making your children pay, watch your decisions *pay off!*

Plan ahead. Even meals prepared at home can be unhealthy, so you need to take time to plan for and learn about healthy food choices. Get tips for feeding children from www.eatright.org and www.kidfood.org.

Actively involve children in food choices and nutrition education. Children who help with food preparation and understand some basic nutrition principles are more likely to eat healthier. Kids are naturally inquisitive. Talk to them about eating right.

Your example. This is one of the single most overlooked elements to steering your kids into healthy eating habits. Don't expect them to eat their vegetables if you don't. They need to see you making wise choices.

Oder wisely (when you order). Not all fast food is evil. Some choices can fit into an overall healthy diet. Remember that eating should be enjoyable, so never completely deprive your kids.

Fresh foods. Keep fresh fruits and vegetables washed and ready to eat. You don't have to be in charge of how much and which foods they eat, just provide them with fresh, healthy choices.

Family meals. You can't go wrong with this one. Plan to have a meal together at least a few nights a week (and keep the TV off!). Not only can this help them eat better, kids need this time to connect with you.

Ricky Virk, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Health and Human Performance
Central Oregon Community College
Contributing Faculty Member for ProHealthNet

Kim Batchelor: Sold on Fitness

Battalion Chief Kim Batchelor knew he was going to be a firefighter from the time he was ten years old. “Maybe that is because I thought the trucks were cool,” recalls this Marion County Fire District (MFD) firefighter (Salem, Oregon). Now after six years as a firefighter in the Air Force and 25 years at MFD, it is still “cool” to be a firefighter. “I like being a public servant, helping people, and running calls,” states Batchelor.

So how does a 52-year-old stay fit enough to handle the demands of shift work – and enjoy it? Maintaining his fitness plays a critical role for Batchelor. Kim does some type of exercise every day. He walks or does yoga every day off with his wife. Batchelor rides his bike to work most days, goes dirt biking for entertainment, and does push-ups or climbs a ladder on off days. “I like to do workouts that do not require special equipment.”

Fitness is not the only benefit of exercise. Batchelor likes the camaraderie that is developed when his shift works out together. “Working out

together with mild competition has been enjoyable. It brings us together with a common goal,” claims Batchelor. He makes sure his shift exercises together whenever possible. They often set up a circuit to rotate through, sometimes adding firefighting skills (packing a hose, raising a weight up a tower, or performing a “forced entry” move) into the circuit. “The whole team starts thinking about what kind of stations to add,” comments Batchelor. “The shift workouts have made working out fun for the people who don’t normally do it.”

According to Batchelor, most people do not workout naturally – “there is no drive at birth to workout.” Being a firefighter provides the motivation for many to stay fit, but what about those who lack the motivation? “The administration has the responsibility to make fitness time available for those who are not self-motivated. They (administration) may not have the money to put toward it, but they need to set the boundaries and make it (time) available,” theorizes Batchelor.

Any other reasons for firefighters to stay fit? Plenty, according to Batchelor. “If people would just exercise long enough for it to become a habit, they would see the benefits in their psychology, energy, and with less sickness.” Battalion Chief Batchelor continues, “Because I workout with my shift, I have a better feel of their fitness level which helps me know what they are going to be able to handle on a call.”

Kim Batchelor is a leader by example, words, and actions. When strong leaders lead, people follow. Kim Batchelor is living proof.



Lessons from Olympic Athletes & Coaches

Implications for Youth Sports

The United States Olympic Committee (USOC) is in the business of winning medals. As such, the USOC is very interested in identifying negative and positive coaching behaviors that influence the performance of American Olympians. Several studies have been commissioned by the USOC to examine these factors. The results of these studies, conducted at the Olympic Games in Atlanta (in 1996) and in Nagano (1998) have some interesting implications for those involved with youth sports.

Chief among the factors reported to influence performance were both athlete and team confidence. Youth athletes are highly influenced by their self-confidence. Confidence can be viewed as a “buffer” against stress and anxiety. In other words, the more confident your athletes, the less likely they are to be anxious. Anxiety is usually *not* an emotion associated with having fun. In fact, anxious youth athletes are generally the most likely to report negative attitudes about their sport and are also quite likely to drop out.

The “key” to building confidence in younger athletes is to give them *something* to be confident in. That may *not* necessarily be the outcome of the game. Athletes may not be very confident at all in their capacity to defeat an opponent. However, that does not mean that they cannot play with confidence. If youth coaches emphasize *controllable* factors (i.e., intensity level, ability to demonstrate a particular skill, or ability to execute the game plan) that younger athletes *know* they are good at, confidence will rise. Emphasizing outcome, which most of the time is uncertain, rarely does much to enhance confidence.

Another coaching factor that influenced Olympic performance that relates to youth sport is the concept of over-coaching. At the Olympic level, over-coaching was seen as having a powerful negative impact on athlete performance. As a sport

psychology professor and performance enhancement consultant for the past 10 years, I can attest to the impact of this very prevalent issue. The very best coaches that I have worked with have had the confidence to know when to not say anything! For most coaches this is counter intuitive. However, the ability to avoid over-coaching is a skill that really separates the good coaches from the bad. Coaches need to occasionally let things go, even when they know *exactly* what’s wrong and *exactly* how to fix it. This is especially true when working with kids. So, when working with young athletes, remember to error on the side of under-coaching, not over-coaching. Let them play!

One last lesson we can learn from our Olympians is to hold realistic team expectations. For the Olympic athletes, coaches who held unrealistic expectations impaired athlete performance. Youth

Confidence can be viewed as a buffer against stress and anxiety.

sport coaches need to help their athletes set goals that are challenging, yet realistic enough that they can consistently experience success. Often, this means setting process-type goals (e.g., using

correct footwork in soccer or using good shooting technique in basketball) as opposed to outcome (e.g., winning the game). These types of goals are directly controllable by the athlete and should allow them to experience success even if a game is lost. Experiencing success is imperative for younger athletes as it directly impacts their enjoyment of the youth sport experience.

So take a few lessons from the U.S. Olympic athletes and coaches. Enhance the confidence of your athletes by giving them things to be confident in, don’t over-coach, and help your young athletes set realistic goals for themselves. Do these simple things and you’ll find the enjoyment level of your young athletes will rise.

Jon Hammermeister, Ph.D.
Director of Health Education
Eastern Washington University
Sport Psychology Consultant, U.S. Ski Team
Contributing Faculty Member for ProHealthNet

The Allowance: Your Child's Introduction to Money Management

There is a lot of information out there about giving your children an allowance. While there are differences of opinion on how much you should give and whether you should base it on good grades or doing chores, most authorities agree giving an allowance is a great way to teach your children how to manage money responsibly.

If you are a parent, you will probably agree that children spend a tremendous amount of money. Not only do they have more money to spend than previous generations, they develop spending patterns at an earlier age. What your children learn about money comes from the ideas, attitudes and spending habits they learn from you, their peers and in the media.

So Why Give an Allowance?

An allowance teaches your children money management skills because it allows them to manage their own money based on their own needs, wants and goals. Your children learn from their own mistakes at a time in their lives when the consequences are less serious.

For instance, if they spend money they have earmarked for a weekend movie with friends, the greatest consequence they will face is that they may not be able to go to the movie. By contrast, if they squander funds earmarked for tuition or rent, they could end up out of school or moving back home (scary thought).

If you are considering an allowance for your children, here are a few things that could help make the process go smoothly:

- As soon as your children start asking about money and how things are bought and sold, they are ready to receive an allowance. Don't be surprised if your three-year-old shows an interest. Buy a piggy bank and

use this opportunity to teach your younger children about saving at the same time.

- After discussing an amount — your 15-year-old should, of course, receive a larger allowance than your seven-year-old — and payment schedule with your family, put it in writing to avoid any confusion.
- Be clear on the terms of the allowance, if any. If all parties have agreed to tie the allowance to household chores, describe the chores in detail as well as any consequences of not performing those tasks.
- By all means, help your children set up a spending and savings plan and suggest how the funds could be used more effectively. But, once you give your children an allowance, allow them to control how it will be spent.
- And, pay on time (show them you can manage your money, too).

Children who learn good money management skills while they are young stand a better chance of becoming adults who can make sound financial decisions, avoid excessive debt and manage income and expenses to reach their financial goals. So give them an allowance.

Frank Wu
Vice President - Investments
Salomon Smith Barney Inc.
Contributing Faculty Member for ProHealthNet

Frank Wu is a Financial Consultant with Smith Barney in Laguna Niguel, CA. He can be reached at 1-800-965-2576. Salomon Smith Barney does not provide tax or legal advice. You must consult your own legal and/or tax advisor.

Childhood Obesity – What is Your Role?

In 2003, the Office of the Surgeon General reported that more young Americans aged 6 to 19 are overweight than ever before. In fact, in the last three decades the number of overweight youths has more than doubled.

During this same time frame, another national tendency occurred. There has been a substantial decrease in the physical activity level for most Americans due to advances in technology and mechanization, changing structure of family dynamics, and the elimination or reduction of Physical Education classes in the schools. Coincidence? Most experts think not.

As an influential adult in the life of a child, what can you do to reduce the risk of childhood obesity? Recognize that the lack of physical activity is a major player when it comes to healthy weight maintenance for children. Less than half of U.S. youths participate in regular and vigorous physical

activity (Bar-O. et. al, 1998). Look for ways to increase the opportunity for kids to be active. Plan family outdoor activities, limit the child's daily monitor time (computers, television, video games), encourage participation in local sporting programs, and be a physically active role model.

Want to *really* make a difference? Actively push for and promote the need for Physical Education classes in the schools. Encouraging a physically active lifestyle at an early age is critical. 40% of obese 7-year old children and 70% of obese adolescents become obese adults (Bar-O. et. al, 1998). Physical Education classes and after-school sport programs are a perfect place to help establish a healthy and active lifestyle. If these programs are administered by qualified individuals and emphasize fun, we can avoid many of the social, health, and economic costs associated with childhood obesity.

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PO Box 666
Bend, OR 97709

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