

Healthy Choices



Giving Kids Alternatives for School Lunch

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Purpose

- To investigate the personal preferences pertaining to healthy eating and school lunch choices of adolescents and their parents at a middle school
- Results were used to educate those students regarding healthy eating habits



Methods

- Population: 7th grade students in a home economics class at Sycamore Middle School in Sycamore, Illinois
- Surveys were given to students and parents to investigate choices regarding eating habits
- A homework assignment was distributed in which the students recorded how many fruits and vegetables they ate per day



Methods

- Results of the surveys were used to formulate a new school lunch menu with collaborating dietitians in the community
 - Illinois Department of Public Health
 - University of Illinois Extension Office
 - Kishwaukee Medical Associates
- The menu was presented to the students during a class session which was also used to educate them regarding healthy eating choices



Methods

- The dietitians presented the information at the educational session in 3 stations
 - 5-A-Day (samples provided)
 - Calcium Intake
 - Portion Sizes
- An exit survey was given after the session to assess student feedback

Findings

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Parents</u>
Eat fast food	96%	93%
# times fast food/week	86% 1-2x/wk	88% 1-2x/wk
# times snack/day	80% 1-2x/wk	95% 1-2x/wk
Hard to eat healthy school/work	48% no 48% yes	48% no 41% yes



Findings

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Parents</u>
Eat healthy diet	85% sometimes/most of time	96% sometimes/most of time
Bring/Buy lunch	81% both bring and buy	84% bring
Feel school lunch healthy	31% yes 58% no	48% yes 44% no
Who packs lunch	62% pack their own lunch	59% do not pack student's lunch



Exit Survey - Findings

- 86% would eat the revised lunch menu
- 57% would not make any changes to the menu
 - Changes include increasing variety or changing the meat, dessert or vegetable/fruit
- 56% feel their peers would eat the menu
- 84% feel their parents would be happy with the changes



Important Issues

- Most parents want child's input in order to make meals more successful
- 71% of students feel that the education they received will help them to make healthier choices
- 67% of students feel the school newsletter should include information on healthy choices



Important Issues

- Medical risk factors/doctor's influence play minimal roles in getting people to eat healthier
- 30% of parents feel their children had issues with weight/healthy lifestyle
 - Ties in with Healthy People 2010 goal of reducing childhood obesity from 11% (1988-1994) to 5% by education and physical activity



Important Issues

- 19% of parents feel that discussing healthy issues with their children may lead to eating disorders
 - Linked to a 2-year study in 1999 by the International Food Information Council Foundation which reported similar attitudes among parents



Ongoing Issues to be Addressed in the Future

- Actual implementation of a revised, healthier menu through addressing faculty/administration
 - Cost issues
 - Suppliers (frozen vegetables instead of canned)
- Healthy lifestyle discussions included in school newsletter
- Continuing education about the definition of healthy foods/choices



Resources

- JAMA
- The Child's Doctor
- Family Practice News
- Nutrition Basics
- The Lancet
- Healthy People 2010
- www.eatright.org
- www.healthyschoollunches.org
- www.nsba.org
- www.pcrm.org
- www.kidnetic.org
- www.fns.usda.gov