

On the Move Junior Program Improves Nutritional Intake among Children 2015-2016

The Situation

More than 30 percent of North Dakota children 2 to 5 years of age are considered overweight or obese (with a BMI-for-age above the 85th percentile). According to the Youth Behavior Risk Surveillance Survey (2015), 42 percent of North Dakota students in grades nine to 12 consumed vegetables less than one time daily, 75 percent of adolescents were not physically active at least 60 minutes per day, and about 12 percent were not physically active 60 minutes on at least one day during the seven days prior to the survey.

Extension Response

Agent Medbery presented "On the Move Junior," a five-week school-based curriculum for second-graders at Minto Elementary School. It is based on MyPlate, the current icon for nutrition, and includes children's story books and hands-on activities. The curriculum aims to improve the variety of healthful foods that children consume, especially the amount of fruits and vegetables they consume. It also aims to improve fitness habits. Parents receive newsletters and participate in goal setting and other family-based activities.

Impacts

Since 2014, 2,936 children (averaging 7 years old) have participated. In 2015-16, 1,676 students in 25 counties completed the program. They improved their knowledge of nutritional recommendations as shown by test scores:



89 percent ate more fruit



80 percent ate more vegetables



87 percent tried a new food



80 percent tried fruits of different color



90 percent engaged in more exercise

According to survey results, 83 percent of parents read the weekly newsletter. Parents reported that their children asked questions about food (62 percent), offered help with food preparation (48 percent), requested healthful snacks (49 percent) and tried a new food (47 percent).

Feedback

Parents said (nine months later):

- "It's great getting kids to be aware of healthy food at a young age."
- "My daughter enjoyed learning about and trying new foods."

Students said (nine months later):

- "I eat wheat bread instead of white now."
- "I am picking healthier snacks."
- "I use my MyPlate for dinner and try and fill each section."

Public Value Statement

Improving health behaviors can increase quality of life and save millions of dollars in collective health-care costs for North Dakotans throughout their lifetime.

County Impact

A total of 21 students from Minto Elementary School completed a nine month follow-up survey. Results showed that:

- 96% of youth are exercising at least 30 minutes per day
- 82% are eating more fruits than before the program
- 73% are eating more whole grains and 82% continue to try new grains.

County Contact

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