

SECTION one

TRAINING FOR HEAD START

MODULE 1

Weight Matters



To better understand childhood overweight, this section will explain how *overweight* and *at risk of overweight* is determined in children. It will show the increasing number of children who are becoming overweight every year and show that many overweight children do not grow out of it just by getting older.



The causes and health concerns of overweight will be addressed and some of the areas where Head Starts can make a difference will be highlighted. There will also be information to help Head Start staff interpret growth charts and share growth chart information with parents.

Body Mass Index, or BMI, is a number calculated from a person's weight and height. BMI is a good indicator of

body fatness in most people. BMI does not measure body fat directly, but research has shown that BMI correlates to direct measures of body fat.

MORE ON BMI CHARTING

BMI is calculated by taking weight in kilograms and dividing it by height in meters squared. Adults can also use a chart (Figure 1a) and find height in feet and inches along the top row and weight in pounds along the left column. The number where the column and row meet is an approximation of BMI. For those over the age of 20, a BMI less than 18.5 is considered underweight; a BMI between 18.5–24.9 is considered normal weight; a BMI between 25.0–29.9 is considered overweight; and a BMI greater than or equal to 30 is considered obese.

However, BMI alone is not a diagnostic tool. To determine if an individual is overweight or obese, a health-care provider might evaluate the individual's diet, physical activity and family history, as well as collecting skin fold thickness measurements, and conducting other health screenings.

HEIGHT IN INCHES

	5'	5'1"	5'2"	5'3"	5'4"	5'5"	5'6"	5'7"	5'8"	5'9"	5'10"	5'11"	6'0"	6'1"	6'2"	6'3"	6'4"
100	20	19	18	18	17	17	17	16	15	15	14	14	14	13	13	12	12
105	21	20	19	19	18	17	17	16	16	16	15	15	14	14	13	13	13
110	21	21	20	19	19	18	18	17	17	16	16	15	15	15	14	14	13
115	22	22	21	20	20	19	19	18	17	17	16	16	16	15	15	14	14
120	23	23	22	21	21	20	19	19	18	18	17	17	16	16	15	15	15
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145	28	27	27	26	25	24	23	23	22	21	21	20	20	19	19	18	18
150	29	28	27	27	26	25	24	23	23	22	22	21	20	20	19	19	18
155	30	29	28	27	27	26	25	24	24	23	22	22	21	20	20	19	19
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175	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	27	26	25	24	24	23	22	22	21
180	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	27	26	25	24	24	23	22	22
185	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	27	26	25	24	24	23	23
190	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	26	26	25	24	24	23
195	38	37	36	35	33	32	31	31	30	29	28	27	26	26	25	24	24
200	39	38	37	35	34	33	32	32	30	30	29	28	27	26	26	25	24
205	40	39	37	36	35	34	33	33	31	30	29	29	28	27	26	26	25
210	41	40	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	28	27	26	26
215	42	41	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	28	27	26
220	43	42	40	39	38	37	36	34	33	32	32	31	30	29	28	27	27
225	44	43	41	40	39	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	31	30	29	28	27
230	45	43	42	41	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	30	29	28
235	46	44	43	42	40	39	38	36	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	29
240	47	45	44	42	41	40	39	37	36	35	34	33	33	32	31	30	29
245	48	46	45	43	42	41	40	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	31	30
250	49	47	46	44	43	42	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30

FIGURE 1a: Understanding BMI
Body Mass Index

- 18 OR LESS UNDERWEIGHT (BLUE)
- 24 OR LESS NORMAL (GREEN)
- 25-29 OVERWEIGHT (YELLOW)
- 30 AND OVER OBESE (ORANGE)

THE FED'S VIEW
www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/index.htm

For population assessment, calculating BMI is one of the best methods of evaluating overweight and obesity trends over time. Calculation requires only height and weight. It is inexpensive and easy to use for clinicians and for the general public. The use of BMI allows people to compare their own weight status to that of the general population. Research has shown that BMI correlates to direct measures of body fat, such as underwater weighing and more advanced measures of body fat.^{1,2}



Assessing BMI in Children

BMI is calculated the same way for children and adults; however BMI for children is plotted on a growth chart. The growth chart is age- and sex-specific because the amount of body fat changes with age and the amount of body fat differs between girls and boys. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC, BMI-for-age growth charts take into account these differences.

The CDC uses the terms *obese* and *overweight* to describe adults. When referring to children the CDC recommends the terms *at risk of overweight* and *overweight*.

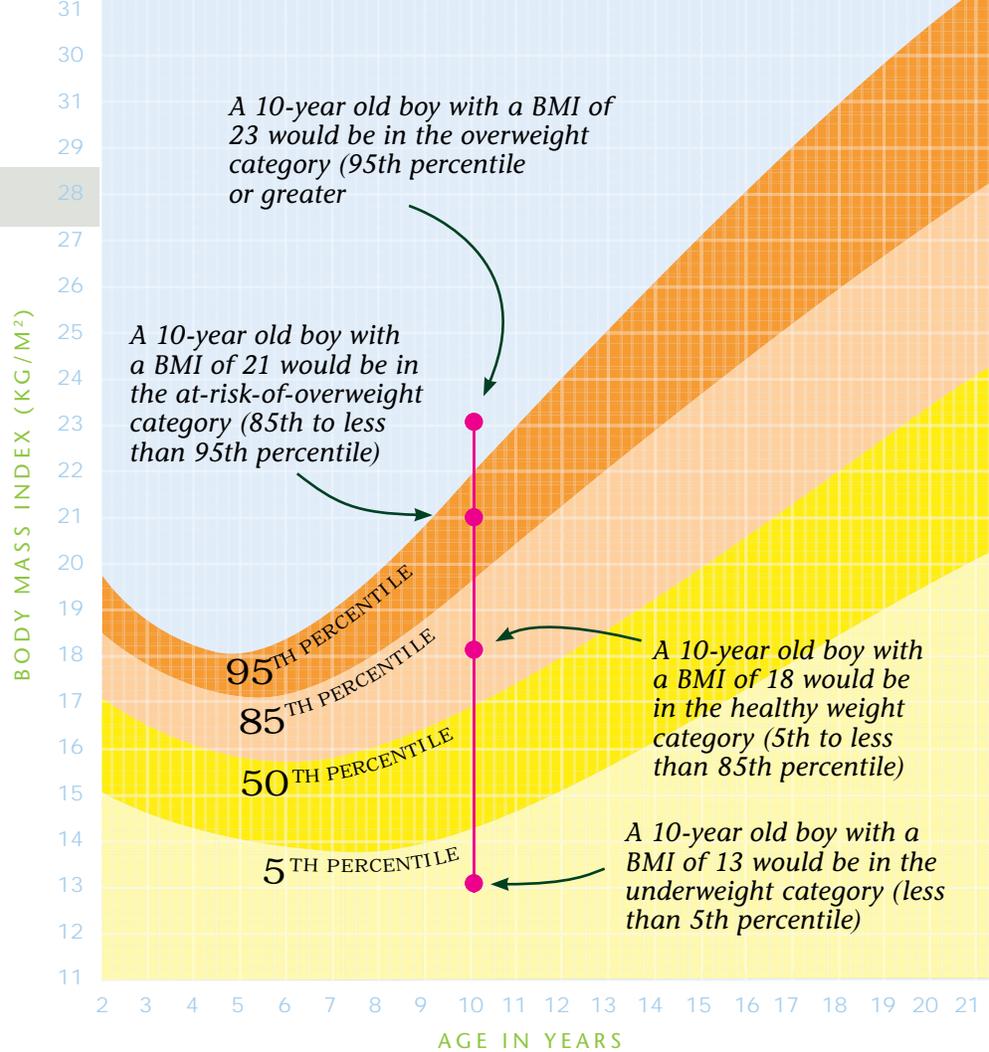


FIGURE 1b: BMI for Boys 2–21 Years

In Figure 1b, the growth chart shows BMI percentiles for boys age 2 to 20 years. A 10-year-old boy is used for an example.

The 10-year-old boy in the blue shaded area has a BMI of 23, which is above the 95th percentile. This boy would be in the overweight category. The 10-year-old boy in the dark orange shaded area has a BMI of 21 which is above the 85th percentile, but below the 95th percentile.

This boy would be in the at risk of overweight category. The 10-year-old boy in the light orange shaded area has a BMI of 18 which is above the 5th percentile but below the 85th percentile. This boy would be in the healthy weight category. The 10-year-old boy in the light yellow shaded area has a BMI of 13 which is below the 5th percentile. This boy would be in the underweight category.

UNDERSTANDING PERCENTILES



DIVE IN DEEPER

partners.hss.state.ak.us/takeheart/pdf_files/BMI%20Chart.pdf

OUR SOURCE FOR FIGURE 1B CHART

www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/childrens_BMI/about_childrens_BMI.htm

MORE ON GROWTH CHARTS

www.cdc.gov/growthcharts/

The easiest way to explain percentiles is to use Figure 1b. The 10-year-old boy with a BMI of 18 is plotted on the 75th percentile line. This means that 75 percent of children the same age in the United States have the same or smaller BMI than him and 25 percent have a higher BMI.

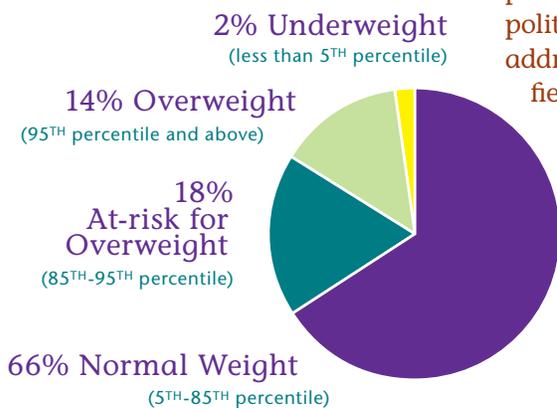
State of Overweight Among Children

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It is extremely important to address nutrition and physical activity to promote a healthy weight in the early child care setting because research suggests children are becoming overweight or at risk of overweight during their toddler and preschool years. Head Start staff have the opportunity to teach children and families good healthy habits to prevent weight gain in early childhood.

FIGURE 1c: Anchorage School District BMI Status

Kindergarten and First Grade Students: 1998–2003



OUR SOURCES FOR THIS CHART

Figure 1c shows the weight status of Anchorage School District kindergartners and first graders. Eighteen percent are at risk of overweight and 14 percent are overweight. When overweight and at risk of overweight are combined, 32 percent of students are above a normal weight.³ This suggests that weight gain occurs during the toddler and preschool years emphasizing the importance of nutrition and physical activity in the Head Start setting.

Currently there is no available Alaska statewide information about overweight preschoolers, so we must look at national information. Figure 1d is from the 2004 National Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance Survey report. The figure shows the percent of overweight children aged 2–5 years by race and ethnicity. As shown, there has been a steady increase in weight since 1995 for the total population as well as for the American Indian/Alaska Native population.⁴

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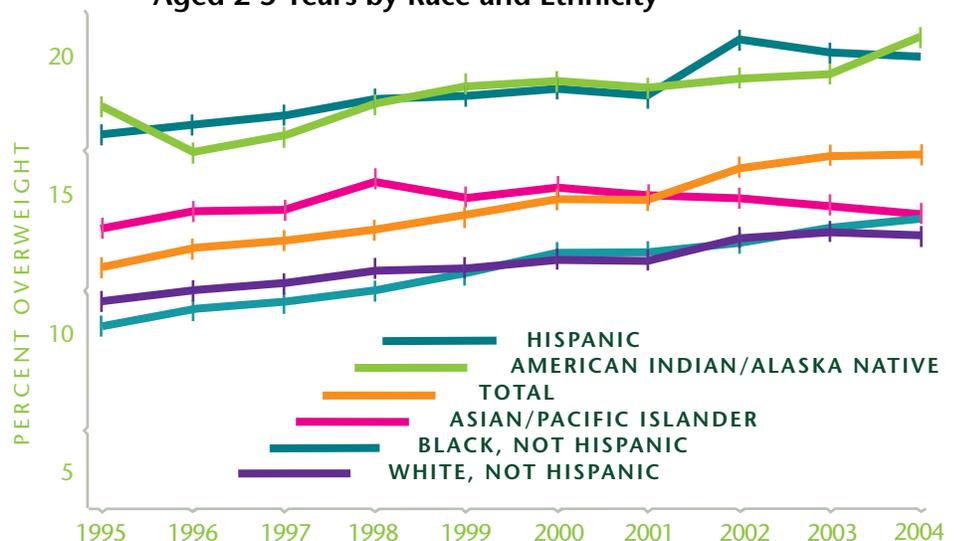
Various unpublished reports and health provider testimony suggest that Alaska's preschoolers are following a similar trend in the increasing numbers of overweight children. Health professionals, public health specialists, and political leaders are working to address the issue and have identified schools and preschools as a target area. After parents, schools and preschools have the greatest influence on a child.

Parents do not always recognize that their child is overweight. In one study, parents with overweight children were asked if their child was overweight, normal weight, or underweight. Only 27 percent of the parents accurately described their female child as overweight and 14 percent accurately described their male child as overweight.⁵

When talking with parents about their child's weight it is very important to consider the parent's view of their child. If parents are not correctly identifying their own child as overweight, they are very unlikely to listen to advice about good nutrition and physical activity if they feel overweight is the underlying topic. Therefore it is very important that health professionals and early childhood educators discuss childhood overweight in a manner that increases understanding and provides solutions. Those solutions are to encourage healthy, lifelong diet and physical activity habits in children to promote healthy growth, prevent disease and increase physical coordination and strength.

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FIGURE 1d: Overweight Among U.S. Children Aged 2-5 Years by Race and Ethnicity



OUR SOURCE FOR THIS CHART

2004 National Pediatric Nutrition and Surveillance Survey

Peterson E, Utermohle C, Green T, & Middaugh J. Prevalence of Overweight Among Anchorage Children: A Study of Anchorage School District Data: 1998-2003. Bulletin Vol. 8(9), November 10, 2004. Section of Epidemiology, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Social Services, State of Alaska, Anchorage, Alaska. Available at www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/bulletins/docs/rr2004_09.pdf

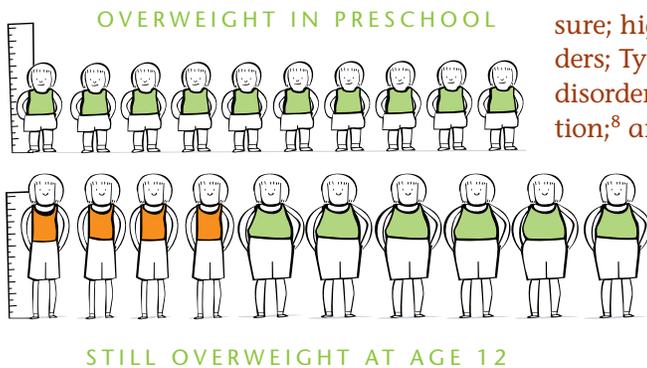
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Studies have shown that overweight children do not always “grow out of it.” Children who are at risk of overweight and overweight in early childhood have an increased chances of being an overweight or obese adult.

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A study from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development showed that six of 10 overweight preschoolers were still overweight at age 12 (Figure 1e). The study also showed that eight of 10 overweight elementary children were still overweight at age 12.

FIGURE 1e: Preschoolers Overweight by 12



DETAILS OF THE NICHD STUDY

THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF CHILD HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT (NICHD)
www.nichd.nih.gov/od/secc/index.htm

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Health Concerns and Causes of Overweight

Parents want their children to lead healthy, productive, disease-free lives. Head Start staff can help families and children understand that good nutrition and physical activity can help achieve these goals.

The current and future health of a child can be affected if a child is overweight. Overweight and at risk of overweight children have an increased risk of: high blood pressure; high cholesterol; joint disorders; Type 2 diabetes; psychosocial disorders; facing social discrimination;⁸ and becoming obese as an adult.^{6,7} These diseases in adults can increase the risk for: early death; heart disease; diabetes; arthritis; gallbladder disease; and certain types of cancer.

The increased risk for poor health in childhood because of overweight and at risk of overweight threatens to make this generation of American children the first to have a shorter life span than their parents.⁹

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The causes of overweight and obesity are very complex and a single answer will not resolve the issue. Each of the levels of influence and factors listed in Figure 1f play a role in the amount of physical activity the individual chooses and the food selections made. Head Starts are in the perfect position to influence many of these factors.

At the individual level, Head Starts can provide education to increase nutrition knowledge to both families and children and can model healthy eating behaviors. At the home level, Head Starts can provide education on the importance of family meals, feeding practices including reasonable portion sizes, and encouragement on decreasing TV and screen time. At the community and organizational level, Head Starts can provide parent and child care provider training and education and serve healthy foods at the Head Start. At the environmental and policy level, Head Start staff and parents can leverage their power to recreate societal and cultural norms and influence policy at the local, state and national level.

In one study, growth data from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development were analyzed. Height and weight of participating children in the study were measured at seven different ages: 24, 36, 54 months and 7, 9, 11 and 12 years.

Children who were ever above average weight (greater than the 85th percentile) one time at ages 24, 36, or 54 months during the preschool ages were more than five times as likely to be overweight at age 12 than those who were below the 85th percentile for BMI at all three of the preschool ages. During the elementary school period, ages 7, 9, and 11 years, the more times a child was overweight, the greater the odds of being overweight at age 12 years compared to a child who was never overweight. A child who was overweight once while at elementary school was 25 times more likely to be overweight at 12, compared to a child who was never overweight while at elementary school.⁶

Another study chose to use the term obese instead of overweight to describe children above the 95th percentile. This research examined the relationship between obesity in childhood and obesity in adulthood by reviewing the epidemiologic literature published between 1970 and July 1992. For all studies and across all ages, the risk of adult obesity was at least twice as high for obese children as for nonobese children. The risk of adult obesity was greater for children who were at higher levels of obesity and for children who were obese at older ages.⁷

FIGURE 1f: Levels and Factors Influencing Nutrition and Physical Activity



Interpreting GrowthCharts



Head Start staff are required by Head Start Performance Standard 1304.23 to work together with the child's family to identify nutritional needs, including height and weight information. Many Head Starts plot each child's height and weight information on a growth chart. For children over the age of 2, the CDC BMI age- and sex-specific charts should be used. These charts can be shared with parents to help lead staff into discussions about food, nutrition and physical activity with the family. However, the growth chart needs to be presented properly. As noted before, almost 75 percent of parents with overweight children do not consider their child overweight.⁵

Discussing weight issues with parents must be done carefully and with an emphasis on the importance of good nutrition and regular physical activity as an investment in their child's current and future health.

Changing Alaskans' food knowledge and societal norms will be difficult and take time. However, parents are more easily influenced because of their desire to provide for their children. The goal is to have families make food choices for their children as an investment in their child's current and future health.



Changing Alaskans' physical activity knowledge and participation will also be difficult and take time. Many Americans spend more time watching TV and on the computer than being physically active. Head Starts can help address these issues by providing physical activity education to children and to parents. Children and families can benefit from participating in physical activities, receiving quick and easy physical activity ideas, and education about being physically active in small indoor spaces, as a family, and during all seasons of the year.



Most experts agree that the factors influencing a child's weight are parents/family, businesses/worksites, community programs, media, the health system and the child care provider setting (Figure 1g). Head Start can play a role in the solution. Over 3,500 children in 105 Alaska communities spent time in Head Start during 2004, underscoring the important role Head Start staff play in helping children and families make healthier choices. Head Start provides the perfect environment to educate, influence and teach children and parents about good nutrition and physical activity.



Healthy Children

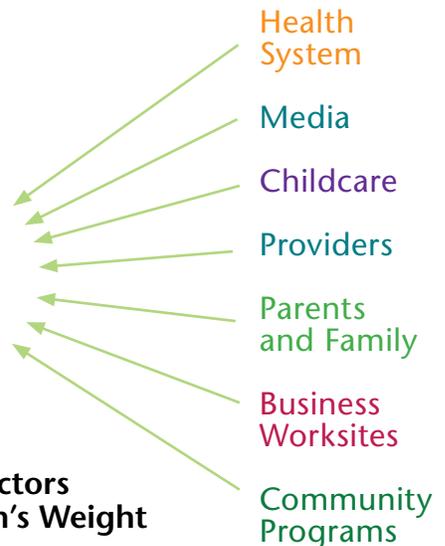


FIGURE 1g: Factors Affecting Children's Weight

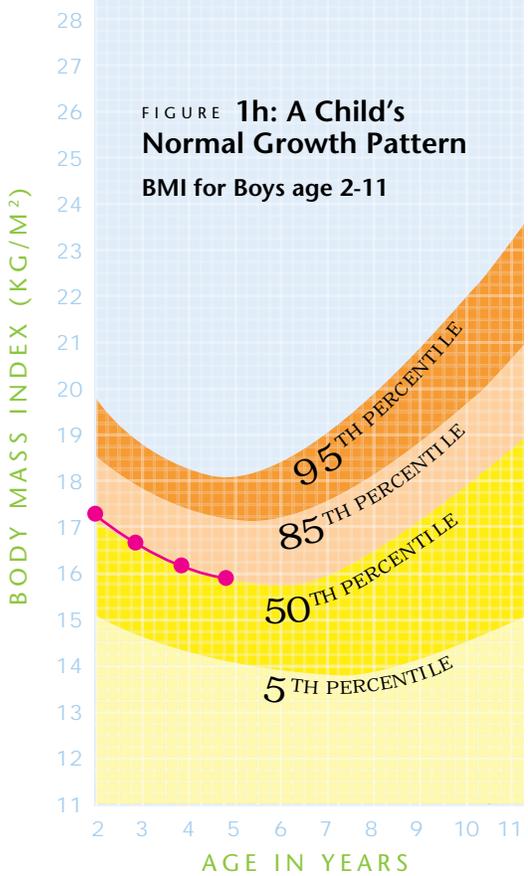


FIGURE 1h: A Child's Normal Growth Pattern
BMI for Boys age 2-11

Growth charts are not just used to determine overweight but are used to follow a child's pattern of growth. Plotting a child's BMI on a growth chart at different ages in their Head Start career and following the growth curve is important. Over time, a child's growth curve gives a general picture of how the child is developing physically. Overall growth patterns can be tracked by comparing BMI to national averages for children of the same age and gender, and to measurements from previous ages.

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When tracking a child's growth, it is more important that the child is growing at a steady, appropriate rate than that he or she hits a specific number on the chart. Figure 1h shows a child following a normal growth pattern. This child is at the 50th percentile for his weight, and has been at the 50th percentile the last three years. The child is following the expected curve of growth and therefore he is likely growing normally.

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Weighing and measuring children takes time and effort and so it is important that the measurements provide useful information for staff and families and are beneficial to the children. One key part of making sure information is useful is to ensure that height and weight measurements are accurate. Children should be weighed and measured properly so that they are put into the right weight category and their growth patterns show correct information.

To demonstrate how critical accurate measurements are, here is an example of a 5½ year old boy. The boy weighs 41.5 pounds and is 43 inches tall. Using those measurements, the boy has a BMI of 15.8 and a BMI-for-age at the 50th percentile, which is in the healthy weight range. If the boy was inaccurately weighed at 42.25 pounds, a mere ¾ of a pound different, the boy's BMI would be 16.3 and BMI-for-age in the 75th percentile. Although this boy would remain in the healthy weight category, his growth chart would show an increase in BMI and might cause unnecessary concern among teachers and his family.

To make sure that height and weight measurements are accurate, Head Start staff should use the same equipment each time a measurement is made. They should also use the same technique for measuring children. Training on how to take height and weight measurements should be provided, with a refresher course each year.

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If the a Head Start child had the growth pattern shown in Figure 1i, Head Start staff would want to double check that the BMI was calculated correctly, that the age was calculated correctly, and that the BMI and age were plotted correctly. If these three checks are correct, the next step would be to re-weigh and measure the child and plot the new information. If the child is truly showing a pattern of weight gain as shown in Figure 1i, Head Start staff should talk to the child's parents and explain the purpose of the growth chart, explain the pattern of concern and refer the child to a health care professional to be evaluated.

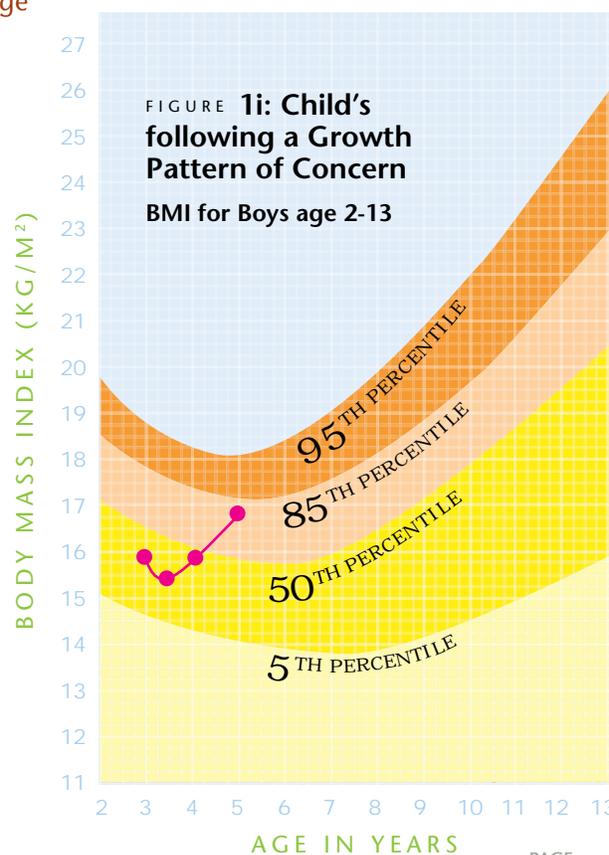


FIGURE 1i: Child's following a Growth Pattern of Concern
BMI for Boys age 2-13



The pattern of growth shown in Figure 1i is of concern because the child had been at the 75TH percentile for a year and then moved above the 85TH percentile. In this case, the pattern of growth for the child is what is important, not the actual BMI. As shown in Figure 1i, the child's BMI at age 3 is very similar to his BMI at age 4½. The change in the percentile is what causes concern about the child's growth.



The child in Figure 1j has only one BMI plotted on the growth chart. The boy is at the 95TH percentile indicating he is overweight. However, the child's health provider is the only one that should diagnosis a child as overweight. Since Head Start staff cannot make a medical diagnosis of overweight it can be difficult for staff to talk to parents about the growth charts of children above the 85TH percentile. If used correctly, however, the growth charts can be used to talk about a child's health without upsetting parents.

Head Start staff members work with the child every day and know the child's body shape, about the child's eating and activity habits, and about the family. Therefore, staff can use the growth charts with families to help open a discussion about

healthy weight, healthy eating and active play. When discussing the growth charts, staff should clearly explain to the parents what the growth charts measure and what the percentiles mean. They should ask parents about their perception of their child's weight. This provides the opportunity to ask the parents if the child's health care provider has talked to them. If the family has not talked with a health care provider about their child's weight, Head Start staff should refer the family to a provider. In the meantime, Head Start staff should offer to provide local resources and information about healthier eating and physical activity.

GETTING A FULL DIAGNOSIS

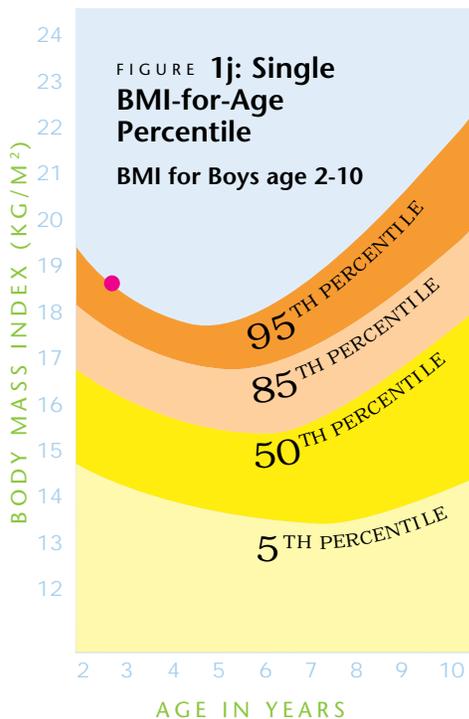
What Head Starts Can Do

To address the issue of childhood overweight, Head Starts should find ways to increase the level of education on physical activity and nutrition given to parents and children, continue to serve healthy foods, and increase the amount of active play in the classroom. These improvements can be made without impacting the other Head Start requirements. Physical activity and nutrition education can be used to teach science, literacy, math or any of the other domains of learning.



INSPIRE YOUR KIDS TO EAT WELL AND STAY FIT

health.gov/DietaryGuidelines
www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/childrens_BMI/children_tips.htm



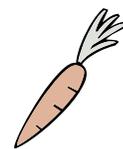
BMI alone is not a diagnostic tool. For example, a child may have a high BMI for age and sex, but to determine if excess fat is a problem, a health care provider would need to decide. It is important for the child to be seen by a health care provider because there are various health concerns associated with weight gain. The provider will evaluate height and weight independently using the CDC 2 to 20 years Weight-for-age and Stature-for-age growth charts to determine if changes in weight or height had a greater impact on the BMI. A health care provider may also check skin fold thickness measurements, evaluated the diet, physical activity, family history, and perform other appropriate health screenings. The goal for overweight children and adolescents is to reduce the rate of weight gain while allowing normal growth and development.

The following materials in this training manual will provide information to Head Start staff on improving the food environment and improving physical activity in the Head Start classroom. There are also materials to be used by Head Start staff to encourage parents to increase the number of meals eaten together, improve the selection of healthy snacks and meals, and increase the amount of physical activity at home. The last section of the manual is designed to help food service staff plan, prepare and serve nutritious meals for Head Start



children and addresses the use of traditional food use in Alaska's Head Starts. This information is valuable for all staff members so that food service staff menu planning decisions are understood and supported by all Head Start staff.

Although the material is divided into sections for classroom staff, parents, and food service staff the information in each module can be used by all Head Start staff interested in learning more about the importance of good nutrition and active play for preschool children.



MODULE ONE ENDNOTES

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- 2 Garrow JS & Webster J. Quetelet's index (W/H²) as a measure of fatness. *International Journal of Obesity*. 1985; 9(2):147-53.
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- 9 Ohshansky SJ, Passaro DJ, Hershov RC, Layden J, Carnes BA, Jacob Brody J, Hayflick L, Butler RN, Allison DB, & Ludwig DS. A Potential Decline in Life Expectancy in the United States in the 21st Century. *New England Journal of Medicine* 2005; 11(352):1138-1145.

Nutrition in the Classroom

To help prevent the development of childhood overweight and chronic diseases, it is important that healthful eating habits are established early in life. Children learn about foods through formal education, first-hand experiences, hands-on approaches, observation, and what is served to them. Therefore, a variety of healthy eating teaching strategies, behavior modeling, and education opportunities need to be presented to children everyday.

The preschool years are a critical time to introduce and encourage healthy nutrition because early exposure to healthful foods helps children establish good eating habits that carry into adulthood. Children establish food preferences and dietary habits during the first six years of life.¹

It is essential to introduce a variety of healthy foods to children at an early age.

In the previous module, the causes and health concerns regarding childhood overweight were introduced. This module will suggest ways to support healthy eating in the classroom, support our choosy and slow eaters, link classroom activities to nutrition, provide parents with nutrition information, address food served at celebrations, and provide tips for incorporating nutrition into everyday classroom experiences.



Supporting Healthy Eating

Head Start staff have the privilege of eating meals and snacks with children every day. This time is a great opportunity for staff to talk about food and model healthy eating behaviors. There are also many developmental and socialization benefits to children when meals and snacks are eaten together with their classmates and with adults. For these reasons, children should be encouraged to participate with the social and educational interactions of the meal or snack, even if they choose not to eat.

Socialization skills are practiced when children ask for food to be passed, assist each other, talk to each other and adults at the table, and practice their manners. Motor skills are developed when children serve themselves because they practice lifting, pouring, scooping, and aiming. Head Start classrooms should be equipped with furniture and eating utensils that enable children to eat, to serve, and to pass food without difficulty. Eating together should also include nutritional benefits and education.

Eating together at the Head Start table is a time when children develop some of their food preferences. Head Start meals provide the opportunity for children to become familiar with flavors, smells, textures and a variety of foods (PS 1305.23(c)(1)). Head Start staff should encourage children to help with meal service by setting the table and cleaning their own dishes by putting them in the dish pan (PS 1305.23(c)(7)).



Children should be verbally encouraged to serve themselves, and containers and scoops sized for children should be provided. Children who serve themselves and are properly supported by adults can learn to serve themselves reasonable portion sizes and learn how to self-regulate their food intake. This supports the division of responsibility concept for feeding children.

Ellyn Satter, a child nutrition expert, pioneered the concept of the division of responsibility for feeding children. She reminds us that caregivers and parents are responsible for the what, when and where children are fed. Children are responsible for how much they choose to eat and whether they choose to eat.

Based on the division of responsibility theory, Ms. Satter discourages power struggles relating to food. She notes that struggles have the potential to set children up for a lifetime of dysfunctional eating. Caregivers trying to control the amount of food children consume can override the child's natural ability to regulate intake. Repeated prompts to eat, using food as a reward or punishment, restricting non-nutritious foods, or using other forms of manipulation to control a child's food intake may promote a lifetime of overeating or refusals to eat (PS 1305.23(c)(2)).²

Head Start staff members need to understand this division of responsibility to help children develop healthy eating habits.



Positive role models can have great influence on children eating food and forming healthy eating habits. Children learn about foods through formal education, first-hand experiences, hands-on approaches and observation.^{3,4} When staff eat the same foods as children, and serve as role models, they are sending the message “do as I do” not “do as I say.”

Since children are influenced by the foods they see staff eating, staff should not eat or drink foods in front of the children that are not on the daily menu (PS 1305.23(c)(4)). Staff should also avoid negative facial expressions, body language or verbal cues in regard to the food being served. Staff should also be careful to limit children seeing them eat high fat, especially sweet or salty snacks, or sugary beverages in the classroom and the community.

THE PROVEN POWER OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES



Providing children and adults a positive message about what is healthy results in better eating habits.

In one study, families were either counseled on increasing fruit and vegetable intake or decreasing fat and sugar intake. Those counseled to eat more fruit and vegetables ate a healthier diet than those told not to eat fat and sugar.⁵ Therefore, encouraging healthy foods consumption is preferred over telling children what not to eat.



When eating meals with children, staff should talk with them about the foods served and the health benefits of the food. For example, staff can use positive messages like “steamed carrots are my favorite orange vegetable” and “I eat carrots to help me see better.” These simple statements reinforce the learning of colors, the categorization of vegetables, and the knowledge that carrots are important for vision. A child’s decision to eat foods will be influenced by what adults eat and by what he or she are encouraged to eat by adults.



Supporting the Slow and Choosy Eater

Preschool-age children go through a normal developmental phase called “neophobia,” or fear of new things, such as new foods. This stage is often called the “picky eating” or “choosy eater” stage. Research by childhood nutrition experts note that it can take up to a dozen times before a food becomes familiar to a child. To help preschoolers overcome the natural tendency to reject new foods a variety of foods should be consistently offered.¹ Eventually food will become familiar to the child and this will lead to more healthful eating habits.



In one study, families with obese parents and non-obese children were randomized to groups in which parents were provided a comprehensive behavioral weight-control program and were encouraged to increase fruit and vegetable intake or to decrease intake of high-fat/high-sugar foods. Child materials targeted the same dietary changes as their parents without caloric restriction.

Both groups received the same basic information, but the groups differed in the behaviors targeted for change. In the group that increased fruit and vegetable consumption, the goal was to increase intake of fruits and vegetables to reach at least two servings of fruits and three servings of vegetables per day. Participants in the decreased fat and sugar group were provided guidance to reach a goal of no more than 10 servings of high-fat/high-sugar foods per week.

The group counseled to increase fruit and vegetable decreased their intake of fat and sugar even though nutrition education did not address sugar and fat. Parents in the increased fruit and vegetable group showed significantly greater decreases in the percentage of overweight than parents in the decreased high-fat/high-sugar group. Education about how to eat healthy was more likely to lead to improved diets than education about what not to eat, as measured by increases in fruit and vegetables and decreases in fat and sugar.⁵

And, just like children overcome their fear of going down the slide at the playground, they will also overcome their fear of new foods. Thus, the more times the food is introduced the less likely the child will be afraid and the more likely the food will eventually be eaten.



Food jags in children, when children only want to eat one food, are common. Food jags rarely last long enough to be harmful. Children who are energetic and growing are probably eating enough. The strategies for addressing choosy eaters can also be used to get children through the food jag phase.

Head Start staff can help children overcome their choosy eating by allowing them to explore and taste new foods. During Head Start meals and snacks, sit the choosy eater with adventurous eaters so they can observe and learn



to accept new foods. Suggest the choosy child try a very small serving, 1-2 tablespoons, of the food and praise the child for tasting instead of talking about what a choosy eater the child is. When a child says he is full or finished, let the child stop eating even if there is still food left on his plate. If there is a child in the class that always throws food away, work with that child individually to select more reasonable portion sizes.

Acceptance of new foods takes time. Children need to learn and become familiar with food by smelling, examining its texture, looking at it, and experimenting with it. Staff should be careful not to discourage this behavior by calling it “playing with your food” or referring to it in a negative way. Rather, staff can help children explore new foods by teaching about flavors, textures and colors.



Canned pineapple is tangy, carrots are crunchy, broccoli is green, milk is smooth and white.

Eating food also takes time. Some children will be slow eaters and should be allowed to eat their meal at their own pace. Research in adults suggests that slower eaters are less likely to be obese.⁶

A staff member or volunteer should stay with the child until she is done eating. It might help to sit slower eaters together and identify a staff member that will stay at the table with the children until finished. To allow slower eaters time to eat, schedule activities after meals that do not require group participation and cause the child to rush (PS 1305.23(c)(3)).

Classroom Nutrition Education

Integrating nutrition and physical activity into all curricula and domains of learning provides children with repeated exposure to information and principles for healthy living. Repeated exposure and experience with nutrition education and physical activity will influence children in a positive way. Incorporation also tends to “normalize” healthy eating and lifestyles for children. Children will begin to understand that nutrition and activity are a regular and essential part of each day, thus reinforcing a lifetime of healthy eating and physical activity habits.



To improve the acceptance of new foods, staff can teach a lesson before meal time about the new food. For example, if the new food is pineapple, a book about characters in Hawaii eating pineapple could be read at circle time. Children could be asked if they have ever have eaten fresh or canned pineapple, if pineapple is a fruit or a vegetable, if they think pineapple grows in Alaska, and if anyone would like to try eating pineapple at lunch? Taste tests can be conducted of fresh versus canned pineapple to promote sensory exploration of new foods. Using circle time to set the stage for lunch will improve familiarity and curiosity about the foods served at lunch.





Circle time can also be used to teach children about ethnic or traditional foods before serving. For Alaska Native foods, an elder or fisherman can tell the story of fishing. Fishing gear such as nets and poles and a filleting demonstration can be shown to the children. To introduce and teach about ethnic foods and cultures spend a whole week to build up anticipation and end the week with a cultural meal.



On the first day introduce traditional-style clothing and place some in the dramatic play area. Have the children make decorations using traditional styles. The next day, play traditional music, practice dance steps, and play with musical instruments. The next day, read a book about traditional foods, show pictures from a cookbook, and talk about the foods. Then, practice making a food. For Mexican culture, roll out tortillas, for Italian use the pasta maker, or for Native Alaskan sort and wash blueberries. On the last day, the children will be excited to eat the new foods.

Another way to introduce children to new foods is to let them help prepare the food.

Classroom staff and food service staff will need to plan and work together to set up the classroom for these events. Smaller groups of children can also help with food preparation in the kitchen. When helping in the kitchen, food service staff need to assure children are properly supervised around hot stoves and sharp knives in addition to following proper sanitation regulations. In the kitchen, children can help measure and stir ingredients. Children will be curious about how food changes when cooked. Show children how food looks, smells, and tastes before and after it is cooked. For example, broccoli changes shades of green and is no longer crunchy, pasta noodles do not smell much before cooking, and toast becomes brown and crunchy.

PLAY WITH YOUR FOOD

Pea Salad

- 4 cups cooked peas
(two 10-ounce packages frozen peas)
- ¾ cup finely chopped onion
- ½ cup finely chopped radish
- ¾ teaspoon crumbled dried tarragon
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1½ tablespoons white-wine vinegar
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper



In a bowl toss together the peas, the scallion, the radish, the tarragon, the oil, the vinegar, salt and pepper to taste until the salad is combined well.

Serve chilled. Makes eight ½ cup servings.

Blueberry Compote

- ¼ cup water
- ¼ cup 100% apple juice
- 2 cups blueberries (10 oz)
- 1 tablespoons lemon juice

Boil water and 100% apple juice in a 1-quart heavy saucepan, uncovered, 5 minutes. Stir in blueberries and simmer, stirring occasionally, until blueberries begin to burst, 3 to 5 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in lemon juice.

Serve warm or chilled on whole wheat pancakes or French toast. Makes about 1½ cups.

Vegetable Puppets

The ideal stage for a vegetable puppet show is, naturally, the dining table. The puppeteer hides below, holding the puppets above the edge.

Materials suggested:

- Large carrots • Popsicle sticks • Parsley
- Peanut butter (or cream cheese if students have peanut allergies) • Raisins or olives
- Celery • Green beans

To make a vegetable puppet, place a popsicle stick into the bottom of the fat end of a peeled carrot. Using peanut butter, or cream cheese if students have peanut allergies, as glue, affix raisins or olives for eyes and a nose, a slice of celery for the mouth, and parsley sprigs for the hair. For the arms and legs, cut green beans in half and affix with generous amounts of peanut butter or cream cheese. The puppets can be eaten as a snack when served with a glass of milk.

A small but growing number of students have severe peanut and/or tree nut allergies. Before providing foods made with peanuts, peanut butter or other nuts as a snack, make sure there are no food allergy restrictions (PS 1305.23(c)(6)).



Food preparation and demonstrations in the classroom are a wonderful way to increase familiarity and introduce new healthy foods to children. This will also increase understanding of cooking and begin



to develop some skills and interest in food preparation. Generally, preschoolers are able to mix or stir food, make sandwiches, spread soft spreads, tear greens, help to pour and measure, set the table, and help clean up.

Children could help make a cold green pea salad using thawed frozen peas. With assistance the children could measure the peas, chopped onion, chopped radish, oil, vinegar, salt and pepper, and stir it all together. Or children could make fruit compote from blueberries picked during a field trip. The blueberry compote can be eaten with pancakes the next day.

Meal preparation can be used to teach numbers, colors, textures, patterns and sequencing. While preparing, ask children questions such as “what shape are peas,” “what color are blueberries,” and “are peas crunchy or soft?” Helping prepare the food will increase the child’s interest in eating the food. (See previous page for recipe.)

Gregory, the Terrible Eater
Mitchell Sharmat

Bread and Jam for Frances
Russell Hoban

The Carrot Seed
Ruth Krauss

Eating the Alphabet:
Fruits and Vegetables from A to Z Lois Ehlert

Growing Vegetable Soup
Lois Ehlert

Green Eggs and Ham Dr. Seuss

The Very Hungry Caterpillar
Eric Carle

Stone Soup
Marcia Brown

Bread, Bread, Bread:
(Foods of the World) Ann Morris

Lunch
Denise Fleming

Pancakes, Pancakes! Eric Carle

We Like to Nurse Chia Martin

Picky Nicky Cathy East Dubowski

Walter the Baker Eric Carle

Peanut Butter and Jelly:
A Play Rhyme Nadine Westcott

Children are curious about food. Allowing children to play with food provides children the opportunity to see it, smell it, touch it and test it before eating. Use food items in edible art projects, such as making flowers or faces from fruit and vegetable pieces. Making vegetable snack puppets helps children experiment with vegetables. Almost any fresh, thawed frozen, or canned vegetables can be used.

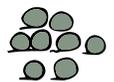


Display and read children’s books which relate to and present a positive view of healthy eating and physical activity. Children love listening to stories at circle time. Select books and activities to help weave a theme through the entire day or week. For example, if a book about baking is read, teach the children about yeast breads. They can even help knead dough as a classroom activity.



Teaching children about food sources can increase a child’s curiosity and acceptance of food.

Along with books and explanation of foods, consider growing edible plants in the classroom. Many plants can be started from seeds indoors in wax-lined Dixie cups or in plastic four or six-pack plant containers. When possible, provide opportunities to learn gardening and growing of fruits and vegetables by having a garden at the center or by participating in a community garden.



VEGETABLE PUPPETS INSPIRED BY
familyfun.go.com/arts-and-crafts/cutpaste/feature/famf38foodart/famf38foodart3.html

READ IT! READ IT! for Early Childhood Educators.
Books for reading with your preschooler, as well as music, puppets and other giggly fun!
lexicon.ci.anchorage.ak.us/guides/kids/booklists/storypackets/index.html

Alaska may not have many traditional orchards or farms, however most areas have a local gardener or person with farm animals. Ask your local gardener or farm animal owner if your class can take a field trip to his or her place. For gardens, visit several times throughout the year to help the children understand the progression of the plant growth cycle. Integrate the learning of the garden or farm field trips into the curriculum by teaching why certain foods grow in Alaska's climate. Watch the farm animal owner milk his or her cow or collect eggs from nests. When possible match the foods seen at the garden or farm with foods served in the Head Start classroom that week.



There are many opportunities in Alaska to teach about local and traditional food sources. Field trips can be taken to pick wild foods such as blueberries, fiddleheads, or beach asparagus. Invite a local hunter to share a story about fishing or hunting, talk about gun safety, and teach children how to butcher an animal. If Department of Conservation Alaska Food Code regulations are followed, the blueberries, fiddleheads, beach asparagus and meat can be prepared and served to the children as a meal.

Designing and decorating the classroom can support nutrition education. The creative play area can be stocked with models of healthy food, cooking utensils and empty boxes or containers of healthy food. The classroom walls can be decorated with posters showing good food. Pictures of vegetables can be used to help teach letters and numbers, name tags can be made with the child's favorite fruit, placemats can depict a plate with reasonable child-sized portions.



Parent Nutrition Education

A clever idea to educate parents, improve nutrition at home and establish healthy habits is to assign Head Start children "homework" that promotes good eating and physical activity. On the weekend "homework" could be: eat five servings of fruits and vegetables over the weekend; be active for at least 30 minutes each day; help your parent in the kitchen; sleep more than eight hours on Saturday night; and eat breakfast each morning.

Teachers must be careful to assign homework that is attainable for the children. Homeless children may be unable to help in the kitchen, some children may not have breakfast foods at home, and some may not have access to canned, frozen or fresh fruits and vegetables. However, adjust the homework to meet the needs of the children in your classroom.

Head Start menus and newsletters are an excellent way to inform parents about the nutrition education learned in the classroom (PS 1305.23(d)). Newsletters can include healthy recipes that emphasize foods provided to Women, Infants and Children (WIC) recipients since a large percentage of Head Start families are eligible for the WIC program. The recipes found on the state of Alaska WIC Web site use WIC ingredients and ingredients common to Alaska.



Classroom menus can be written to emphasize nutrition messages such as "low-fat milk," "whole wheat rolls," and "vitamin A-rich sweet potatoes." Adding nutrition information to menus and newsletters will help educate families and provide them with useful information.

Celebrations

Head Starts can help promote a positive learning environment by providing healthy celebrations that shift the focus from food to the event. Replace food with a variety of activities, games and crafts that children enjoy. If food is served, make it count with healthy choices and as part of the regular meal or snack. Head Starts can take advantage of classroom celebrations and serve food that tastes good, is nutritious, and provides a consistent healthy food message. Centers should have established food policy or nutrition guidance regarding celebrations available to parents and community members that help plan Head Start events.



ALASKA'S FOOD CODE

SECTION ONE: 18 AAC 31.205: *Traditional wild game meat, seafood, plants, and other food donated to an institution or a nonprofit program.*
SECTION TWO: 18 AAC 31.210: *Prohibited food.*



The policy or nutrition guidance regarding celebrations should include information about why the policy is important. Party planners can be reminded that healthy kids learn better and that Head Start wants to provide consistent messages about healthy behaviors. The policy should support the classroom lessons students are learning about health instead of contradicting them. Healthy celebrations promote positive lifestyle choices to reduce children’s health risks and improve learning. The excitement children feel from the event may help improve their acceptance of healthy foods.



Development and adoption of the celebration policy should involve parents, community members, Head Start staff and food service staff (PS 1305.23(b)(4)). In general, the policy should discourage celebrating with especially high sugar foods such as soda pop, candy bars and cakes. The policy should address food with trans fats and high fat foods such as fried or highly processed foods. Communities have been supportive of no smoking and weapon policies at the Head Start. With the proper information, parents and communities will support a healthy celebration policy too.



Establish Healthy Eating Habits

Head Start staff have the opportunity to help children establish healthful eating habits early in life by increasing exposure to foods through a variety of teaching and support strategies. Providing children with hands-on experiences, formal education, healthy modeling of eating, proper support, consistent messages, and educating parents will help children develop good eating habits that carry into adulthood. Establishment of healthy eating habits is critical to prevent and reduce the incidence of childhood overweight and associated chronic diseases.

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RECIPES, MENUS AND MORE!

THE STATE OF ALASKA WIC

hss.state.ak.us/ocs/nutri/WIC/recipes/default.htm

THE AMERICAN DIABETES ASSOCIATION

vgs.diabetes.org/recipe/index.jsp

THE AMERICAN DIETETICS ASSOCIATION

eatright.org/ada/files/Healthy_Eating_Recipes.pdf

THE AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION

americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=1200010

PROVIDENCE HEALTH SYSTEMS IN ALASKA

providence.org/alaska/library/whatscookin.htm

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?info_center=14&tax_level=2&tax_subject=230&topic_id=1191&placement_default=0

Physical Activity in the Classroom

Why Promote Physical Activity?

One of the primary reasons for promoting physical activity in the preschool setting is that regular physical activity, combined with a balanced diet, can help prevent overweight among kids.

As discussed in Module One, childhood overweight is on the rise in the United States. Much of the focus around childhood overweight is on the foods kids eat. Some individuals think that kids today are heavier because they eat more junk food than in past years. While that may be true, fast food and soda are not the only reason kids are gaining weight. A study done in 2003 showed that kids are only eating 1 percent more calories than they did 20 years ago, but they are 13 percent more inactive. Therefore, while we need to improve the foods kids eat, we can't forget that they also need to move!

Module One gives background information on childhood overweight. The material in this module will focus on how to promote physical activity in the Head Start classroom.

What is Physical Activity?

Physical activity is any bodily movement, produced by muscles, that burns energy. So...any kind of moving counts as physical activity!

Physical activity doesn't just mean jogging or push-ups.... in reality, many things that kids consider "having fun," such as swimming, playing tag, or riding a bike count as physical activity.

Moderate intensity physical activities are those that get your heart beating fast. Things like walking, bike riding, or mowing the lawn are examples of moderate physical activity. Vigorous physical activities are things that really make you sweat. Running, aerobics, or shoveling snow might fall into this category.

Physical Activity Recommendations

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that all children participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity most days of the week to maintain good health.²

However, if your child is overweight or at-risk for overweight, increasing physical activity alone may not produce significant weight loss. Increased activity along with improved nutrition over a period of months will be necessary for noticeable changes in body fat.

All children need both planned activity and free play. The National Association of Sports and Physical Education (NASPE) recommends that preschool children should get at least one hour of structured AND unstructured physical activity each day. While one hour of physical activity may help overall health, two or more hours are needed to develop the motor and social skills that children need to enjoy a lifetime of physical activity.

In addition to being physically active, children should not remain inactive for more than an hour at a time. The only time kids should be not moving for more than an hour straight is when they are sleeping!

It is important that children develop skills in the basic movement forms like running, skipping, hopping, and throwing early on so that they can use those skills as a stepping stone for more complex skills.

Safety should be the highest priority in areas where kids are active. Make sure any play area where kids are playing is free from sharp objects or other dangerous situations. Take a look around playgrounds before students go out for play time to make sure the equipment is working and there are no unsafe items on the playground.



Studies have shown that children enrolled in child care settings with educated staff who value physical activity get more daily physical activity. Your encouragement and role-modeling, along with positive feedback when students accomplish a new physical feat will go a long way in helping our young children develop a love of movement!



Structured activity involves making a specific time to be active, and planning certain kinds of things to do during that time. Teaching children how to move in all kinds of ways will help them enjoy physical activity. To make sure your students are exposed to all kinds of movement you may want to plan specific physical activities to help them.

Young children should learn to jump, hop, skip, kick and throw. Schedule two or three 10-15 minute physical activity breaks each day to help students practice these activities. Structured physical activity is typically adult-driven. The child's activity is directed and encouraged by a supervisory adult.

While structured physical activity is valuable, it is important for children to have time to play. Free play helps develop a child's imagination, creativity, body awareness and sense of space and dimension. Children learn about the world by moving around in it and exploring its wonder! Find safe places outdoors where children play. If the weather is bad, provide soft objects like balls and bean bags for children to play with indoors.



Examples of unstructured physical activity include a game of tag, climbing in a tree fort, pushing a friend on the swing, playing hide-and-go-seek, bike riding through the neighborhood, or kicking a soccer ball around the yard.

- Unstructured physical activity is typically child-driven. The child directs his/her own activity and play.
- Unstructured activity is usually sporadic, characterized by a lot of start/stop activity.



A team effort will be needed to help children meet physical activity recommendations. Head Starts should not be expected to provide all the physical activity kids need. Parents should be encouraged to be active with their children and to enroll them in activity-based teams and events in the community. Local governments provide information to parents on how to be active through parks and recreation programs.

The fact remains, though, that children spend a large part of their day in the school setting. All schools should strive to provide an "activity-friendly" environment where physical activity is modeled and encouraged while inactivity is minimized.

"With the exception of the home, school is probably the only other place with the structure, influence, resources and access to make a significant and sustained difference in terms of fostering a healthy weight."³

Head Start Physical Activity Requirements



Federal and state guidelines are already in place to guide Head Start classrooms toward physical activity. Federal Head Start Performance Standards contain requirements around the promotion of physical development among students. In addition to federal requirements, the state of Alaska is one of only two states to require physical activity time in child care settings.

Child care centers receiving federal funds are required to provide time and space (both indoor and outdoor) as well as equipment and adult guidance for active play and movement

that supports the development of both gross and fine motor skills of all students including those with special needs. Head Start Performance Standard 1304.21(a)(5)(i) states that, "in center-based settings, grantee and delegate agencies must promote each child's physical development by providing sufficient time, indoor and outdoor space, equipment, materials, and adult guidance for active play and movement that support the development of gross motor skills." Performance Standard 1304.21 (a)(5)(ii) makes similar provisions for the development of fine motor skills, and Performance Standard 1304.21 (a)(5)(iii) requires that physical activity opportunities be accessible to all children, including those with special needs.





Alaska and Massachusetts are the only two states to mandate physical activity in child care settings. Alaska is the only state to specify the number of active minutes required during the preschool day. Alaska Statute AAC62.420 requires “a minimum of 20 minutes of vigorous physical activity for every three hours the facility is open between the hours of 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.”



Head Start Child Outcomes Framework

The Head Start Child Outcomes Framework is intended to guide Head Start programs in their ongoing assessment of the progress and accomplishments of children and in their efforts to analyze and use data on child outcomes in program self-assessment and continuous improvement.

The Framework is composed of eight general Domains, 27 Domain Elements and 100 examples of more specific Indicators of children’s skills, abilities, knowledge and behaviors. The Domains, Elements and Indicators are presented as a framework of building blocks that are important for school success. The Framework should guide agencies in selecting, developing, or adapting an instrument or set of tools for ongoing assessment of children’s progress.

The Physical Health and Development Domain contains goals for student achievement in both fine and gross motor skills. Head Start students are expected to develop fine motor skills like dexterity and control needed to use tools such as a scissors, paper punch, stapler and hammer. Students should also increase hand-eye coordination in building with blocks, putting together puzzles and stringing beads.

Head Start students should show increasing levels of proficiency, control, and balance in walking, climbing, running, jumping, hopping, skipping, marching and galloping. In addition, they should demonstrate increasing ability to throw, catch, kick, bounce balls, and use the slide and swings.



The Head Start Framework also calls for progression in physical growth, strength, stamina and flexibility. Students should participate actively in games, outdoor play and other forms of exercise that enhance physical fitness.

How to Promote Physical Activity in Head Start



Activity-friendly schools incorporate physical activity wherever possible. Students should be able to be active during traditional times like recess, but also during instructional time. Activity-friendly preschools look to integrate movement into academic instruction. Since kids learn better when they are moving, teaching reading and math concepts through movement not only improves learning but also helps students get more movement time.

Activity-friendly preschools incorporate fun physical activity breaks and active field trips into the curriculum. They also have staff that understand and value the importance of physical activity and act as active role models.



The classroom environment has an impact on student activity levels.

Every classroom should have a designated activity area that is free from objects like chairs, shelves, and tables. Having this open space will allow students to participate in both structured and unstructured physical activities.

One way to promote physical activity in the classroom is to provide equipment and other manipulative objects that children can use to play or invent active games. Toys like foam balls, hula hoop, and bean bags invite play and imaginative movement!



Children don’t have to be sitting quietly in desks to learn. Quite to the contrary, kids learn better when they are up and moving. Take advantage of the enhanced brain function during physical activity and harness children’s love of moving by incorporating academic concepts into fun physical activities!

Teaching through movement as opposed to fighting an uphill battle of getting kids to sit still not only saves you time and stress, but helps make moving the norm, not the exception.

Sample Activities

An example of how to integrate academic concepts into a fun physical activity is called “Alphabet, Vegetable, and Chicken Noodle Parachute Soup.” It’s a fun way to teach kids about letters of the alphabet, healthy foods and cooking principles. See [handout](#).



Sample Activities

Remember, children should not be inactive for more than an hour at a time unless they are sleeping. To make sure students are getting enough movement throughout the day, schedule in a few short activity breaks of about 5-10 minutes in duration.

Move students to your designated activity area and give them a chance to practice the “skill of the week.”



One activity break is called “Jump the River.” The purpose of this activity is to give children the opportunity to practice the skills of jumping and landing while emphasizing swinging the arms when jumping, and landing in a balanced position without falling. All you need is something for kids to jump over (jump rope, hoop, tape lines on the floor). Provide at least one object to jump over per child. Before beginning the activity scatter the jump ropes or hoops throughout the space so they lie flat on the floor.

Explain to the children that they are taking a walk in the woods and may need to cross a stream or river. Ask children to walk throughout the space and when they come to a river (rope, hoop, or tape line on floor) they need to jump over the river without getting their feet wet. Children should work independently of their classmates during this activity.

To assist children in learning the fundamentals of jumping, teachers should initially ask children to take off on two feet and to swing their arms forward when they jump. When landing, children should land on two feet spreading their feet about shoulder width apart so they have a wide base of support when they land. After landing children should proceed to and jump over the next river. Emphasis should be placed on landing on both feet at the same time without falling

MIX IT UP

over. Give children plenty of time to move throughout the space and jump over all the rivers. For safety reasons, suggest that children not get closer than two giant steps from each other, especially when they are swinging their arms to take off and when landing.

After three to five minutes of jumping, children may need a brief rest period (30 to 60 seconds) before they continue the activity.

JUMP ON IN



MORE WAYS TO HELP KIDS LEARN TO MOVE
www.pecentral.org/lessonideas/pe.lessonplans.html
gameskidsplay.net

Vary the activity by asking children to see how high they can jump and how far they can jump when traveling over the river. Emphasize landing on balance without falling over. More experienced children may like the challenge of clapping their hands as they fly through the air, or turning in the air before they land. Whatever the variation, teachers and children should not lose sight of the main objective of landing in a balanced position.

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE, 1995) has developed benchmarks in this area suggesting that by the time a child completes kindergarten he/she should be able to jump and land while being under control. This suggests that children this age should be able to jump in different directions both on the ground and off of low obstacles, and to stay on balance and not fall when landing. Participating in activities such as “Jump the River” will provide children with opportunities for skill practice. Teachers can use this time to observe children’s jumping and landing skills and record their progression toward reaching benchmarks in this area.

Teachers may also want to integrate this idea with a book they read to children about rivers or ways people travel.



Activity doesn't always have to be on a playground! Kids learn about the world by moving through it and experiencing new places, people, and things. For a little variety during "recess" time, consider planning an educational field trip to a nearby park, harbor, field, or salmon stream. Talk about the kinds of plants, trees and animals you see. Talk with people working in the community and have them show the kids what they do!

Local trails and beaches are a great place to get physical activity and learn at the same time. Find different shaped rocks, colored plants and animals. Talk about outdoor safety and dressing appropriately for the weather. Whatever you decide to do, it will be a learning opportunity and will get kids up and moving.

We all know that Alaska winters can be very cold, but don't let that stop your activity! Kids love to be outside when there is snow on the ground, and often don't even notice the chill in the air. As long as kids are dressed properly, provide and encourage cold weather activity.



Use snowy winter days to do physical activities like sledding, skiing, skating and snowman building. All of these activities are fun and are good energy burners. Kids will be doing healthy physical activity without even knowing it! Read the book "Recess at 20 Below" to your students to help them get excited about cold weather outdoor activities.

When the weather is just too cold or wet and you are forced indoors, find creative ways to keep kids moving. One way to do that is to adapt typical outdoor sports so they can be played indoors. For instance, you could play a game of "Socker" using a rolled-up sock as a ball and walls as goals!



Other fun indoor activities include having a treasure hunt, obstacle course, sit-up/push-up contests, or pretend "ice skating" with sock feet on a linoleum floor. Another fun idea is to play music and create a new dance!

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

More experienced children may want the challenge of taking off from one foot and landing on two feet, or jumping off of one foot and landing on one foot. The focus should still be the same—swing arms when jumping and land without falling.

INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES



Get Outside

Every Head Start classroom should have access to a safe place for children to play outdoors. Ideally, this play area will have a variety of equipment like slides, climbing structures, swings, etc. If you don't have immediate access to a playground, consider using the playground of a nearby school or park. If those options are not available, consider forming a volunteer parent/community group to design and build a simple play area near your classroom.

Children with special needs who are not movement restricted should have little difficulty participating in this activity. Children who have movement restrictions can still participate but may need assistance. For example, teachers may need to hold the child's hand to help his or her land on his or her feet without falling. Children in wheelchairs or those who have severe movement restrictions will require a modified activity.

Do not feel limited to only jumping over hoops or jump ropes. This can be a great classroom integration activity and can have many variations. For example, ask children to draw or paint their own rivers on large sheets of paper. Make sure they draw fish, trees and other objects in and alongside their river. Tape children's drawings to the floor and pretend that the class is going on a trip. When children reach the different rivers scattered throughout the room they must swing their arms and jump over the river, landing on the other side without falling over.

If you don't have enough space to do group activities consider using community physical activity facilities. Some schools have covered play areas you may be able to use.



Keep Moving!



As a teacher, remember that it is very important for kids to move as much as possible. Because children have a natural love of moving, your only job is to make sure that they stay safe and have fun doing it! Make sure that your students have time to play freely each day, but plan time during the day for structured physical activity as well.

Finding places to be active in Alaska is as easy as looking out the window. Take advantage of local trails, beaches and mountains to keep your students active and healthy. When the weather is so bad that it's not safe to be outdoors, think about using community facilities or just be creative in the classroom. Either way, try to give your students positive experiences with physical activity so that they will continue to be active and enjoy a long, healthy life.

MODULE THREE REFERENCES

- 1 Sutherland, et.al. Presentation to Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology. April, 2003.
- 2 DHHS, USDA (United States Department of Agriculture). Dietary Guidelines for Americans. 2005.
- 3 National Association of State Boards of Education. The State Education Standard. December, 2004.