

Professor Popcorn: Teaching Youth Nutrition, Physical Activity and Food Safety

Issue: The number of overweight kids in the U.S. has tripled in three decades. About 30 percent of American children aged six to 11 are too heavy, including 15 percent who are obese. This makes overweight the number one chronic health condition for children nationally and here in Indiana. Additionally, today's youth eat too little fruits and vegetables and dairy foods and consume too much fat.

Good nutrition, the importance of being active and knowledge of good food safety practices are key concepts youth need to learn at a young age.

The good news is that research has shown that the healthy habits youth learn when they are young stay with them as adults. www.iyi.org

Extension Response: Using Purdue Extension's nutrition education curriculum for youth, Professor Popcorn Explores MyPyramid, three trained paraprofessionals taught 880 3rd grade students in 40 sites in Marion County. During the summer, 3rd grade youth were also reached at a wide variety of summer day camps and Boys and Girls Clubs. Classes met weekly for 5 weeks. Youth were evaluated pre and post as to their knowledge of basic nutrition and food safety. Youth's behaviors regarding food preparation, food handling and dietary patterns were also measured.

Impact:

- ✓ 71% of youth reported that they practiced one or more healthy food selection habits, at least most days of the week. 11% improvement was reported.
- ✓ 88% of youth reported that they sometimes or almost always practiced one or more food safety habits.
- ✓ 86% of youth reported that they practiced healthy physical activity habits, at least most days of the week, an increase of 6%.
- ✓ 85% of youth reported that they chose to eat breakfast, at least most days of the week.
- ✓ 84% of youth reported knowledge of healthy food choices and food preparation, 5% improvement was reported.
- ✓ 85% of youth reported knowledge of physical activity, an increase of 4%.
- ✓ 64% tried new foods, an increase of 4%.

Partners: Indianapolis Public Schools, Archdioceses of Indianapolis, Pike Township School Corporation, Lawrence Township School System, Boys and Girls Clubs of Indianapolis, Crooked Creek Multi-Service Center.

Contact: Julie Gray, RD
Youth FNP Supervisor
juliegray@purdue.edu
317.275.9305 ex. 260