

Journey to Wellness
A Health Portfolio for Adolescents
by
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ABSTRACT

Adolescents and their parents have a unique opportunity to learn from one another and encourage mutual pursuit of a healthy lifestyle. Discussing beneficial habits and how to ensure wellness are uncommon topics for student consideration in the classroom and seldom included in education programs developed to assist parents. The purpose of this project is to identify important health concerns for decision making by adolescents. Each topic is presented in a manner that enables students to explore their personal risk factors, gain knowledge through individual surveys, set personal goals, promote conversation with parents and peers, and provide online resources that foster understanding. The protocol includes a statement of the problem; recent statistical information regarding each of the topics, commonly used tools for goal setting, relevant web sites, and questions to promote interaction. These collective sources of guidance are intended to support good health practices, empower students to make wise healthy choices about self-care, and promote reciprocal learning between adolescents and their parents.

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Chapter One Introduction to Healthy Lifestyle

This statement of the problem relates to health risks of adolescents and possible benefits of a novel prevention strategy. Resources include recent statistical information relating to each health concern, vocabulary that is commonly used, tools for goal setting, online resources, and questions to promote conversation with parents. Assessments are recommended to determine if knowledge has been gained to ensure an improved quality of life.

The overall goal of this project is to provide adolescents with resources to learn about their health, empower them to make healthy choices while promoting reciprocal learning between two generations, the adolescent and parent. Parents and adolescents can take the knowledge gained and apply it to improving their daily lifestyle habits and activities, resulting in an improved quality of life for both. Included in this project are current initiatives to promote healthy choices, web sites that provide information about the topics for adolescents and parents to learn about health topics and online quizzes to test knowledge of health and wellness topics. By providing information on health topics teens and parents will be provided with tips, lifestyle changes and education to promote their discussion and reciprocal learning.

Cultural change influences adolescent motivation, priorities, and choice of lifestyle. The current generation of youth is immersed in modern technology. They are always connected with peers in social networks.

Unlike generations before them, they have never known a time where there were no cell phones, personal computers, videogames and specialty cable stations. Ten percent of children, ages four to eight, have a computer in their room and 52% of nine to twelve year olds have a personal cell phone (Jayson, 2010). Another characteristic of the current generation of students is a need for immediacy, the expectation for access to the Internet, social networking and email at their fingertips. As a result, they do not know what it is like to wait and therefore always expect instant connection as the norm (Jayson, 2010).

Children and teens are socialized by their parent's definition of how to live. Parents are the most prominent source of learning in the early years. Teens do not have the same growing up experiences as their parents and other adults. The young seem more able to adapt quickly to social changes (Strom and Strom, 2009). Adults also learn from adolescents because teens are often more tech savvy than grownups. Adults rarely communicate using Internet based communication with teens, the medium adolescents find appealing and where they prefer to spend significant amounts of time (Strom and Strom, 2009).

Adolescents are exposed to continual changes in a fast paced world. Choices that children are making impact their health. The fact that adolescents are less active, due to choices that promote a sedentary lifestyle, underscores the importance of creating and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

The intention of this document is to identify common significant health topics facing adolescents and to encourage them to explore through self-evaluation and reflection. This project will provide information to make self-assessments of personal risk factors, gain knowledge through quizzes, set personal goals, promote conversation with parents and peers and provide online resources to improve understanding. By completing quizzes and activity adolescents will gain understanding of health topics that will improve chances of identifying personal risk factors and help teens to acquire knowledge to make appropriate lifestyle decisions.

An alarming topic of recent conversation is that parents might be living longer lives than their children. Due to high calorie diets and little exercise children's lives may be shortened by several years due to co-morbidities such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes (Connor, 2002). Grossly obese children are at a higher risk for angina and heart attacks due to a sedentary lifestyle and fast food consumption (Chapman and Utton, 2010). Children and adolescents are facing health related issues at younger ages than previous generations. Many adolescents are becoming massively obese at a very young age and the younger the age an individual becomes obese, the more severe the life long effects (Chapman and Utton, 2010).

Some of the most pressing health issues involving teenagers include obesity, diabetes; sleep deficit, sexually transmitted diseases, smoking and stress.

Adolescents are dealing with or have peers and friends who are exposed to these conditions. Parents have a unique opportunity to teach, learn and guide their teen in making positive choices that promote a healthy lifestyle. Following this chapter a review of literature will present current initiatives taking place, research findings about the outlined topics and ways this knowledge has been taken into account to launch the present project.

Chapter 2 Literature Review of Current Health Initiatives

National attention has been growing in the area of understanding current health conditions of Americans. Concern about adolescents and children acquiring unhealthy habits, failing to learn how to prevent illness or gaining skills to support optimal health have become the focus of many national organizations. This chapter outlines efforts that are being made to assist children, adolescents and adults to become aware of the current condition of our nation's children and teens as related to the topics discussed in this project. Non profit organizations and media moguls are taking action and reaching out to communities, schools and families, attempting to educate groups and individuals about making positive changes in order to maximize children's health in years to come.

Many state, local and national community organizations and individuals are working on increasing awareness and introducing initiatives to improve wellness and preventative health measures. Efforts are being made to focus on raising healthy generations of children. More awareness and education results in a positive impact on society. Helping children and adolescents to make health conscious decisions earlier in life will establish lifelong patterns. Web based organizations, community and national organizations and media outlets have become involved in helping to coordinate a movement toward building healthier generations. Some prominent initiatives are described.

The first lady, Michelle Obama, has taken obesity and children's wellness on as her focus. She has created a web-based resource for individuals and schools focusing on healthy choices, healthy schools and physical activity. The website, www.letsmove.gov discusses the importance of healthy food choices, a rationale of why schools should provide healthy choices, making healthy foods affordable to the public and stressing the importance of physical activity. The nutrition section of the site provides a printable shopping list and suggestions on food that should be consumed and others that should be used in moderation. User friendly suggestions of cutting costs and shopping tips are provided.

The healthy schools section provides resources for school staff, parents and community members with a checklist to evaluate the schools' food choices, and outlines a healthy school challenge that schools can participate in. According to the site, the federal budget will provide one billion dollars per year for the next ten years to improve the quality of school food and have resources available to improve food selections (<http://www.letsmove.gov/schools/index.html>). There are also ideas and links for finding affordable and fresh produce in areas around the country. The physical activity sections provide families with ideas for play time and physical movement.

Links to the website for the Department of Health and Human Services, provide tips for reducing time spent in front of the television and other electronic entertainments (<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/reduce-screen-time/tips-to-reduce-screen-time.htm>).

We Can! (Ways to Enhance Children's Activity and Nutrition) a national movement under the direction of the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute focuses on providing parents, caregivers and community members ways to support children, eight to thirteen years of age, maintain healthy weight. The focus encompasses being active, eating healthy food, understanding weight basics and reducing screen time.

In order to reach a nationwide audience, *We Can!* partners with community organizations to teach, train and implement the values and curriculum of *We Can!* The *We Can!* website, <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/index.htm>, has many flyers and educational materials for parents, schools, children and adolescents. One of the most user friendly is the GO, SLOW, WHOA flyer that identifies commonly consumed foods and those that should be eaten on a regular basis, once in a while or, on rare occasions. Education and training is also available for schools, after school programs, parks and recreation organizations, YMCA staff and teachers, through a partnership with *We Can!* entitled CATCH (Coordinated Approach to Child Health).

CATCH focuses on the importance of physical activity, healthy preparation of foods and school lunches. The goal is to have students immersed in an environment that encourages a healthy lifestyle. The CATCH website, <http://www.cachinfo.org>, provides a guide for individuals, schools and community organizations interested in learning more about the program and implementation.

The American Heart Association has started a campaign titled American Ideal. It outlines seven simple steps to increase heart health. Topics to increase heart health are quitting smoking, exercising, reducing high cholesterol and lowering blood pressure. Each of the seven steps provides explanations about why it is important to change behavior, suggestions for change and success stories. Also available on the site, <http://mylifecheck.heart.org>, individuals can complete a heart assessment to learn more about what they are susceptible to and at risk for.

Sleep is something that is often overlooked when discussing wellness. A campaign designed by the National Center on Sleep Disorders Research designed a campaign to educate America's children, parents, educators and health care providers about the importance of adequate sleep. Sleep Well. Do Well. Star Sleeper Campaign can be found at <http://www.talkaboutsleeper.com>. The program was established in 2001 and was planned for a five-year initiative.

Today, the campaign has developed for elementary school staff and health professionals interactive web based activities on sleep and provides continuing education and outreach ideas.

The web based resource <http://stressfreekids.com>, offers books, curriculums, CDs to help children, adolescents and adults manage stress, anxiety and anger while promoting self-esteem and sleep. The organization's goal is to have all family members manage their stress, anxiety and anger in healthy ways. Relaxation, deep breathing, visualization and positive affirmations are some of the techniques used.

MTV has launched a campaign consisting of commercials and online resources as well as promoting discussion of sexual health. The MTV campaign can be found at <http://think.mtv.com/Groups/iysl>. It's Your Sex Life covers topics of abstinence, talking with your sexual partner, use of protection, assumptions about HIV and true stories about people and sex. Discussion and the importance of getting tested for sexually transmitted diseases and locations of clinics nationwide are available on this site. Individuals, schools and organizations can sign up for email newsletters about sexual issues and other related topics.

Chapter 3 Method

The goals of this project are to assist adolescents in gaining easy access to understanding health topics that can improve identifying personal risk factors and help acquire knowledge enabling them to make appropriate lifestyle decisions.

Background

An overview outline of current research related to adolescent health and wellness involved examining journal articles, academic books, newspaper articles and websites. The findings were used as baseline information regarding current initiatives to improve wellness and maximize health for children and adolescents.

Parents, teachers and teens are at a unique crossroads when it comes to health. There is a need for improvement in adolescent health and changes for the current adolescent generation and those that follow. Making changes to promote wellness and health will help current and upcoming generations have a better quality of life. (Chapman and Utton, 2010). Schools have the opportunity to provide resources for teens and parents on health and wellness related issues. This can be done in an Internet format through the school's website.

Project Overview

This project provides examples of materials that can be used for parent and teen resources and education. Schools can encourage teens and parents to utilize these resources by advertising in their school newsletter, hosting parent information nights, and emailing links home to parents. Parents and teens may engage in reciprocal learning from the materials, review the literature outlined, complete web based assessments to test their knowledge, visit websites on related topics to expand their knowledge and evaluate their current wellness related habits. Parents and adolescents can incorporate health topics into their daily life, model healthy behaviors and make changes from within the home.

Materials

Health and wellness related websites and articles that focus on health topics are great resources for teens, because teens are comfortable using online resources and many are listed in this project. Web based quizzes, to determine knowledge and promote discussion between parents and adolescents can be an educational tool and an enjoyable way to evaluate their understanding of health and wellness. These are also highlighted in this project as presented in the Determine Your Knowledge section of chapter four.

Teens can choose to explore every one of the six issues including obesity, diabetes, sleep, sexual health, smoking and stress, or choose the topics that are important and relevant to them.

This format of learning is family friendly because adolescents and adults can select from a menu of topics that are important to them and disregard those that they are not interested in or prefer not to consider at the present time. Topics were chosen based on consensus views of the Center for Disease Control indicating these issues deserve attention because they encompass critical aspects of well being for adolescents. Adolescents are at risk of serious health issues, such as substance abuse and inappropriate sexual behaviors. Teen at the same time learning behaviors to reduce their risk of developing chronic diseases in adulthood, and learning healthy behaviors such as good nutrition, physical activity and choosing not smoke (<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/az/>).

Many journal articles, websites and academic articles found for this project discussed moving forward and taking current initiatives one step further to insure implementation. That is the core idea behind this project. The following topics, obesity and diabetes, sleep deprivation, sexual activity, cigarette smoking and stress are relevant health and wellness topics for adolescents in this country. Addressing these concerns will provide adolescents and parents with a greater understanding of the importance of healthy choices and making wellness related choices in order to decrease the effects of unhealthy behaviors.

Key words related to each topic are listed after the current findings as well as web sites that provide additional information on related topics.

The assessment of knowledge section allows the teen to go online and complete quizzes on these topics. The family discussions section is designed to promote conversation, thoughts of changing behaviors and promote reciprocal learning between the teen and parent, when discussing and sharing opinions and thoughts on these important topics.

Chapter 4 Curriculum for Health Promotion

Health promotion curriculum for adolescents should be engaging and include active participation. It should be relevant, meaningful and reflect the voice of teens. The goal of this chapter is to provide health and wellness related curriculum and materials for adolescent and parent education. Developing strong communication between adults and adolescents is key to promoting health and wellness. The information provided is based on current findings and is designed to guide quality conversations on health and related topics. The Determine Your Knowledge section, quizzes and vocabulary are utilized to engage adolescents and family in conversations that are meaningful and will promote reciprocal learning. A list of web sites is provided to enrich and extend knowledge.

Obesity and Diabetes

Obesity of adolescents is increasing at an alarming rate. Studies show that overweight adolescents live a sedentary lifestyle by not incorporating exercise into their daily routine. Many students are not engaging in opportunities for exercise provided at schools and are not exercising at home. Teens maintain a less than active lifestyle by sitting at a desk or computer during the school day and watching television at home. Less than half of adolescents are engaging in physical activity (Strom & Strom, 2009).

Obesity is not limited to just appearance, which might suggest that someone is not working to maintain a healthy lifestyle; it is also a medical concern. Twenty five percent of teens are engaging in 20 minutes of physical activity daily. Teens spend most of their free time engaged in popular sedentary activities, television watching, playing videogames and texting (Cotton, Smith, Hansen, Davis, Doyle & Walsh, 2006). While these activities may be enjoyable, they do not contribute to overall physical wellness. Children are defined as overweight if their body mass index is between the 84th and 95th percentile (Mayo Clinic, 2008). Strom and Strom (2009) stated that the government believes 9 million students are overweight enough to jeopardize their health. According to Ogden, Flegal, Carroll and Johnson (2002) approximately 17% of non-Hispanic whites are currently obese. Non-Hispanic blacks are obese at a rate of 22% compared to Hispanic Americans who have the lowest rate at 16%. The same study indicated that due to obesity, 58% of young adults have at least one risk factor for heart disease.

Rowland and Coffey (2009) stated that overweight teens are at a higher risk for becoming overweight adults. The same study also found that boys are at a higher risk for becoming overweight compared to girls, who are more likely to be overweight as adults. Many parents fail to address the fact that their child is overweight and physicians caring for these children rarely document overweight as a medical condition.

When weight is not discussed, parents and children involved are unaware of the long-term effects of being over weight. (Rowland & Coffey, 2009).

Obesity has increased in the past five decades and adversely affects quality of life. Obesity is also linked to an increased risk of mortality because obesity is associated with a higher risk of type two diabetes, heart disease, hypertension and high blood pressure among other risks. Obesity impacts a person's quality of life as well as reducing years off of the individual's life span, due to related health issues (Pi-Sunyer, 2009).

Adolescents can reduce their relative risk factors by participating in some type of physical fitness activity to improve their overall physical condition. Simple life style choices such as playing basketball at the park or walking the family dog for 30 minutes allows the teen to move his or her body and begins to increase physical fitness. Moderate levels of exercise three times a week makes a positive difference. Brisk exercise such as swimming, walking and jogging will provide a cardiovascular work out that helps reduce levels of stress (Kids Health, n.d., http://kidshealth.org/teen/school_jobs/college/exercise.html). Some adolescents may enjoy working out in a gym, but access to work out equipment is not necessary to achieve the same level of activity. Hiking and jogging are great ways to engage in exercise and cost very little. Walking and biking to school, the store or to visit a friend is another way to incorporate exercises into daily life with little or no cost and interruption of social life.

Incorporating exercise into daily life will help reduce the risk of high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol and cancer. Engaging in exercise will help to build strong muscles, improve flexibility, balance and promote a sense of wellbeing (Mitchell, Church & Zucker, 2008).

Obesity is a contributing factor to diabetes. The incidence of type one and type two diabetes is increasing. Type one diabetes occurs when the pancreas does not produce insulin needed for the body to survive. Insulin is replaced by shots of insulin or an insulin pump. Type two diabetes is a chronic condition due to how the body metabolizes sugar and usually is associated with obesity. Cotton et al., (2006) reported that type two diabetes accounts for 50% of newly diagnosed children and teens. The same study indicated that adolescents eating foods low in nutrients and high in sugar make up more than 30% of their daily calories, causing an alarming trend toward developing diabetes. Parents need to model healthy eating, provide healthy food choices in the home for their children and encourage them to select healthy foods when snacking and at mealtime. According to the American Diabetes Association (American Diabetes Association, n.d., <http://www.diabetes.org/diabetes-basics/type-1/>) type one and type two diabetes are caused by different factors. However, genetic predisposition and environmental conditions trigger both types.

Type one diabetes is inherited from parents, but not all who are at risk develop the disease.

This illness is not preventable, nor curable. However, those with the disease may learn how to live with and manage well so that it causes little interruption in daily life. It is estimated that due to excess weight one in every two children will develop type two diabetes. Developing type two diabetes increases the risk of dying at an earlier age and obese adolescents are likely to live shorter lives by 12 to 14 years as compared to their peers maintaining healthy weight (Strom & Strom, 2009).

Type two diabetes is linked to genetics, but is also linked to environmental factors. Type two diabetes is common in people who consume too much fat, not enough healthy carbohydrates, fiber and do not exercise. Type two diabetes can be curable, maintaining a healthy lifestyle filled with appropriate nutrition and exercise will decrease the chances of developing the disease. A daily diet of healthy foods, such as whole grains, fruits, vegetables and lean protein helps the body to grow and be healthy.

Reducing the amount of sedentary activities such as sitting in front of the television will help keep the body healthy. Mowing the lawn or riding a bike provides movement and exercise for the body. Choosing to engage in one healthy physical activity daily will reduce the chances of developing type two diabetes. More physical activity moves sugar from the blood into the body's cells and the more active a person is the lower their blood sugar (Mayo Clinic, 2009). Highly active people will have a higher level of physical fitness.

Asking a parent or doctor questions about family medical history, weight and exercise will help to determine if there is a risk for developing diabetes. Asking questions and gaining knowledge empowers the adolescent to make healthy changes and to be in control of their personal health. Parents and doctors can provide teens with resources to determine the healthiest weight for the individual and provide support and direction.

The Mayo Clinic website provides a body mass index calculator to check body mass to determine if the individual's current weight is healthy, overweight or obese, as well as recommendations for improving weight and promoting a healthy lifestyle (Mayo Clinic, 2008). The Mayo site provides a separate calculator for adults and children, as teens have other factors such as age and gender that impact their body mass index.

Obesity, Visit These Websites

Mayo Clinic

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/childhood-obesity/DS00698>

American Obesity Association

<http://www.obesity.org>

Kids Health, About Overweight and Obesity

http://kidshealth.org/teen/food_fitness/dieting/obesity.html

Kids Health, When Being Overweight is a Problem

<http://kidshealth.org/teen/nutrition/weight/obesity.html>

United States Department of Agriculture, Assess Your Food Intake

<http://www.mypyramidtracker.gov/>

Key Words

Body Mass Index (BMI)

Diabetes

Blood Pressure

Fiber

Food Pyramid

Sedentary

Physical Fitness

Diabetes, Visit These Websites

Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation

www.JDRF.org

American Diabetes Association

www.diabetes.org

Mayo Clinic, Type 1 Diabetes in Children

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/type-1-diabetes-in-children/DS00931>

Mayo Clinic, Type 2 Diabetes in Children

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/type-2-diabetes-in-children/DS00946>

Kids Health, Teen Health Diabetes Center

http://kidshealth.org/teen/centers/diabetes_center.html

Key Words

Type One Diabetes

Type Two Diabetes

Blood Sugar

Carbohydrate

Glycemic Index

Insulin

Exercise

Pancreas

Determine Your Knowledge

Department of Health and Human Services, National Heart, Lung and

Blood Institute, Portion Distortion Quiz

<http://hp2010.nhlbihin.net/portion/>

Family Education, How Well Do You Know Your Vegetables?

<http://quizzes.familyeducation.com/vegetables/nutrition/65231.html?&detailed=1>

Seventeen, How Well Do You Take Care of Yourself?

<http://www.seventeen.com/fun/quizzes/health/hygiene-health-quiz>

National Diabetes Education Program, Quiz for Teens with Diabetes

<http://ndep.nih.gov/teens/quiz-for-teens/index.htm#>

About.com: Pediatrics, Teen Am I Fat Quiz?

http://pediatrics.about.com/cs/obesity//bl_amifat_quiz.htm

Family Discussions

- 1) Discuss three ways your family can improve their activity level? How can activities be incorporated into the daily routines of every family member?
- 2) Blood sugar levels continually change though out the day. What changes can be made to your daily nutrition to help maintain static blood sugar levels and prevent low blood sugar? Keep track of your blood sugar levels throughout the day.
- 3) Change begins by talking about change. Describe three opportunities that your family can participate in to bring about healthy changes.
- 4) Keep a journal of exercise and nutritional intake. Review and evaluate on a weekly or monthly basis. Consider how to improve and then make a plan. Discuss your ideas with a parent.
- 5) What are your feelings about the rise in obesity among Americans? How do you feel about the topic of obesity? Does the thought of being overweight cause you to re-think your lifestyle habits?
- 6) What should happen in your school environment to promote healthier weight among American adolescents? What should happen within your family unit?
- 7) What roles does boredom play in your eating? Think of a replacement activity for eating.
- 8) How do your friend's attitudes towards eating impact you and your food choices?

9) Make a list of new activities you would like to engage in to increase your exercise and activity level. When your list is complete share it with your parents.

10) What lessons can teachers, parents and friend's model that will have a positive impact on you and your health related choices?

Sleep Deprivation and Deficits

Obtaining appropriate hours of sleep is one personal care that adolescents often are willing to give up in order to spend more time on other tasks. Many adolescents value other activities more than adequate sleep, such as time with friends, homework assignments, part time jobs and personal interests. Teens should sleep for nine hours a night, but it is estimated that 90 percent do not (Mayo Clinic, 2009). Most adolescents are sleeping less than six hours a night.

Sleep deprivation can create consequences of impairment and sleepiness. Adolescents also have school, family and social pressures and when combined with lack of sleep, these situations may facilitate cognitive, behavioral, emotional and academic failure (Curcio, Ferrara & De Gennaro, 2006). Daytime sleepiness can make learning and focusing on school more difficult. Many adolescents who stay up late to complete homework assignments, spend time with friends and engage in other recreational activities have a difficult time getting up for school in the morning. Fredriken, Rhodes, Reddy, and Way (2004) reported that due to early school start times many adolescents do not get as much sleep as they did in their preteen years and this lack of sleep can lead to chronic insufficient sleep. Adolescents begin to stay up later, progressively, in middle school through high school (Wolfson, Spaulding, Dandrow & Baroni, 2007). This combined with earlier start times, contributes to teens not receiving adequate sleep.

A teen's internal clock changes during puberty by delaying the time s/he begins to feel sleepy and staying up late to complete homework and socialize. This affects the internal clock even more (Mayo Clinic, 2008). Wolfson et al. (2007) observed that high school students who experience later class start times do not go to bed earlier but sleep more due to waking up later. Fredriksen et al. (2004) explains that teens that obtain less sleep have a higher risk of suffering from a depressed mood. This change in mood and behavior can influence social relationships and coping skills. Teens who suffer from mood swings and behavior problems due to a lack of sleep may also have difficulty completing tasks safely. Some routine tasks, such as driving, can become dangerous or deadly.

Developing a routine prior to going to bed can help the teen complete tasks, wind down and prepare for a good night's sleep. Exercising during the day and not consuming caffeine in the afternoon and evening will help facilitate sleep. Showering or bathing before bed in warm water can help relax the body. Reading or engaging in a quiet activity, with little stimulus, can help relax and clear the mind before bed. Ensuring homework and other responsibilities are completed by the evening hours gives the teen time to engage in recreational activities and then start to wind down for bed.

Visit These Websites

National Sleep Foundation

www.sleepfoundation.org

Mayo Clinic

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/teens-health/CC00019>

Kids Health

http://kidshealth.org/teen/your_body/take_care/how_much_sleep.html

Key Words

Sleep deprivation

Rapid Eye Movement Cycle (REM cycle)

Circadian rhythm

Insomnia

Caffeine

Determine Your Knowledge

Cleveland Clinic, Test Your Knowledge: Sleep

<http://www.clevelandclinic.org/health/interactive/sleep.asp>

Children, Youth and Women's Health Service, Sleep-Are you Getting Enough?

<http://www.cyh.com>, search sleep quiz

Aviisha, The Sleep Well Quiz

<http://www.aviisha.com/sleep-well/quiz>

Family Discussion

- 1) Evaluate your personal sleeping pattern. What changes, if any, need to be made to your routine to ensure restful sleep?
- 2) How do you feel when you have inadequate amounts of sleep? Compare this to times when you have enough sleep. Make a plan to gain a full night's sleep.
- 3) Create a calendar and record your sleeping habits and patterns for two to four weeks. Review and evaluate. What changes can you make to improve?
- 4) Are there family rules or guidance that could be implemented to help you obtain a restful night's sleep? Should all TVs be turned off by 9:00? Talk with your parents about how their actions can support your efforts to sleep well.
- 5) What are your feelings about school schedules as they relate to promoting adequate sleep? Do you feel changes could be made and if so what are the changes?
- 6) If you had to make personal life style changes, what would they be and how would you and your family react to these changes?
- 7) What are some things you worry about? Does your worry keep you awake at night? Discuss your worries with your family or your friends and brainstorm healthy ways to cope with your worries?
- 8) List steps you can take to reduce evening stress. Share these with your family and enlist their help and cooperation.

9) Do an assessment of your bedroom. Do you need to make physical changes such as darken the window shades, relocate your bed or remove electrical stimulation? Enlist your parent's help to make over your room.

10) Develop a bedtime routine that is relaxing and stress free. Share this plan with your family so they can support you.

Sexual Activity

Sex education is often viewed as one of the most controversial topics schools, teachers and parents face when discussing adolescent development and health related issues. It is estimated in the United States that 11.5 million new cases of sexually transmitted diseases will occur in people under the age of 25 between 2000 and 2006 (DiClemente & Crosby, 2006). The Center for Disease Control and Prevention believes that nearly 19 million new sexually transmitted disease infections will occur each year and half of the infected individuals are people between the ages 15-25 (Center for Disease Control, 2009). Statistically, girls report a higher rate of sexually transmitted diseases and suffer more severe complications than boys. Girls suffer from complications, such as infertility, pelvic inflammatory disease and chronic pelvic pain (Shafii & Burstein, 2004). According to Mayo Clinic (2008) there are more than 25 diseases that are spread by sexual activity and 65 million people will contract an incurable sexually transmitted infection.

Due to the strongly held belief of adolescents that they are invulnerable, many risk their health when engaging in sexual activities, believing they will not contract a sexually transmitted infection. Adolescents face the growing risk of contracting herpes, human papillomavirus, and endemically high levels of chlamydia and HIV infections (DiClemente and Crosby, 2006).

Adolescents also need to be made aware that sexually transmitted infections can be passed on from all types of sex, including mouth to genital sex.

Peers are the strongest social influence on the decision to become sexually active. The perception teens have of their peer's sexual experiences affects their decisions. Adolescents who perceive that their peers postpone sexual behaviors are more likely to postpone as well (Sieving, Eisenberg, Pettingell & Skay, 2006). Adolescents are starting to engage in sexual activities at a younger age compared to previous generations. Teens who are sexually active at young ages have more sexual partners, are at greater risk for contracting a sexually transmitted disease compared to teens that engage in sexual activity at an older age (Sieving et. al., 2006). Similar opinions apply to adolescents engaging in oral sex. Teens engaging in oral sex are associated with their perception of their best friends' oral sex involvement (Strom & Strom, 2009).

Discussion of sex education and healthy choices can be an uncomfortable topic for parents to discuss with their teen, but open, honest conversation is highly important and necessary. Websites like, www.kidshealth.com provide resources for parents on how to engage in conversations about sex and how to make healthy and safe choices. The website provides information for parents, teens and children on sex education as well as other health topics. Abstinence is the only guaranteed way to prevent getting a sexually transmitted infection.

If the teen chooses to engage in sexual activity, taking proper precautions and using protection will help to reduce the risk of infections.

Testing for diseases, utilizing condoms and birth control will help reduce the chance of contracting disease and may prevent pregnancy. Many adolescents avoid seeking medical care due to the concern of confidentiality. One study found that 92% of teens would agree to a urine-based sexually transmitted disease test if their parents would not find out (Shafii & Burstein, 2004). Open dialogue between parents and teens can help make choices that ensure safety and protection.

Visit these Websites

Mayo Clinic

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/teens-and-sex/MY01100>

Sex, Etc.

<http://www.sexetc.org>

Kids Health

<http://kidshealth.org/teen/infections/stds/std.html>

Discovery Health

<http://health.discovery.com/centers/teen/relationships/sexstds.html>

Talking with Kids about Tough Issues

<http://www.talkwithkids.org/sex.html>

Key Words

Abstinence

Sexually transmitted infections

Sexually transmitted disease

Birth control

HIV

Chlamydia

Syphilis

Human Papilloma Virus

Pelvic Inflammatory Disease

Chronic Pelvic Pain

Infertility

Determine Your Knowledge

Kidz World, Quiz! Sex Education 101

<http://www.kidzworld.com/quiz/3009-quiz-sex-education-101>

Sex, Etc. Are you a Sexpert?

<http://www.sexetc.org/quiz/2>

About.com: Teen Advice, Quiz: Sex, Do you Know Your Stuff?

<http://teenadvice.about.com>, search teen sex quiz know your stuff

Sex, Etc. Do you Know How to Apply a Condom?

<http://www.sexetc.org/game/condom>

Family Discussions

- 1) Share family and individual expectations and/or beliefs for sexual behaviors. How are parent and adolescent's opinions similar and different regarding acceptable behavior? How do your personal/religious beliefs impact your choices?
- 2) Discuss using protection during sex. Why is using protection so important? Discuss what to do if your partner does not agree that protection should be used? Justify your beliefs.
- 3) Parents are encouraged to share their personal experiences. Children will learn from the mistakes shared by their parents. Evaluate the experiences discussed and develop a plan for yourself.
- 4) How do you feel about adolescents engaging in sexual activity? How do you feel about peers and friends engaging in sexual activities? Do you feel pressure to participate in sexual activities, even though your family values do not support this type of behavior? How can your parents support you? What can the school do, if anything, to help change the beliefs and actions of teens?
- 5) Do you feel the media makes sexual activity look appealing to adolescents? What changes could be made? Do you believe the media influences teens?
- 6) Does boredom influence your involvement in unhealthy activities? Why or why not?
- 7) Who do you interact with that may negatively influence your behavior?

- 8) How do you feel about your self after engaging in activities that go against your family values?
- 9) What kind of sexual education should parents and teachers provide that will impact adolescents in a positive manner?
- 10) What topics related to sexual health should parents discuss with their adolescent?

Cigarette Smoking

Despite national education for decades, smoking cigarettes is still a common problem among adolescents. It is estimated that 54% of high school students have tried smoking by the age of thirteen (Sherman & Primack, 2009). According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in 2006, 6% of middle school students were smoking cigarettes (Center for Disease Control, 2006). Although it is illegal to sell tobacco products to minors, it is estimated that between 20% and 70% of teens purchase their own tobacco (Center for Disease Control & Prevention, 2000).

Schools have attempted to provide cigarette and tobacco education and programming for decades, but many do not have long lasting results. National programming efforts, such as commercials on the Internet and television, have focused on the alarming statistics about smoking with a comedic sense to help engage the audience. They ask the question “Do you have what it takes to be a tobacco executive?” The commercials on television show people being asked to interview for a job that will kill thousands and to demonstrate how they are comfortable working for a company that sells products that are harmful. The American Lung Association found that 13,000 teens become new smokers each day and 950 of them will become addicted to smoking. Over half of them will die from smoking regularly (American Lung Association, 2010).

Parental smoking does not have an influence on teens choosing to smoke, but increases the chances of a current adolescent smoker continuing to smoke into adulthood. Having a mother or dad who smokes can also affect the adolescent's health through second hand smoke exposure (Paul, Blizzard, Patton, Dwyer & Venn, 2008). Parents should understand these facts. Sherman and Primack (2009) found that educating students about smoking should begin when they are young simply due to the fact that 90% of people who die as a result of smoking started before 18 years of age.

Parents have the opportunity to teach and encourage adolescents to abstain from smoking. Many parents and grandparents grew up believing smoking was safe and the habit was socially acceptable. Sharing personal experiences about smoking and discussing the long term effects of smoking with adolescents is a great way to teach and guide them toward making healthy choices. Many adolescents believe that smoking is a harmless act. However, smoking can interfere with lung growth and increases the risk of respiratory illnesses and cancers. (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2004). Lung wellness is an essential part of maintaining a healthy body and having the strength to engage in sports and physical activities. Smoking has also been identified as a gateway drug that leads to use of marijuana, alcohol and cocaine (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2004).

Visit These Websites

Mayo Clinic, Teen Smoking: Ten Ways to Help Teens Stay Smoke Free

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/teen-smoking/HQ00139>

Discovery Health, How to Tell if you are Addicted to Smoking

<http://health.discovery.com/centers/teen/takingrisks/addicted.html>

American Lung Association

<http://www.lungusa.org>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Youth and Tobacco Use

http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/youth_data/tobacco_use/index.htm

Key Words

Tobacco

Smokeless tobacco

Second Hand Smoke

Nicotine addiction

Lung Cancer

Throat Cancer

Determine Your Knowledge

Aetna, Teen Smoking Quiz

<http://www.intelihealth.com> and search teen smoking quiz

Riverside, Teens and Tobacco Quiz: What do you know?

http://www.riversideonline.com/health_reference/Teen-Health/QZ00040.cfm

University of Iowa Holden Comprehensive Cancer Center, Take a Quiz to Test our Knowledge About Smoking

<http://www.uihealthcare.com>, search teen smoking quiz

Family Discussions

- 1) Share personal experiences of smoking and the outcomes of those experiences. If you have not had a personal experience discuss what you observed in others.
- 2) How do you feel about adolescents using tobacco? List the consequences of smoking and discuss the short term and long term implications of smoking.
- 3) Seek out and talk with elders who have smoked. Ask them to evaluate their quality of life regarding their choice to smoke. Would they recommend smoking if they could live their life over? Why and why not?
- 4) What are your personal beliefs about tobacco use? Does your opinion change when comparing adolescent use and adult use?
- 5) As a family, brainstorm all the reasons why smoking should not be a family value in your home. Create a list of your findings and post it in a central location where family members can view it. Make a written contract that all family members sign, agreeing not to smoke.

- 6) Is peer pressure a major factor that influences teens to take up smoking? If yes, what do you feel can be done to change this trend?
- 7) Image is important to adolescents. Does your image include smoking? Discuss with your family and friends.
- 8) Advertisements make smokers look, young, healthy and energetic. How are smokers influenced by these images? How are you influenced?
- 9) Do you feel pressure to smoke? How can family be more helpful to you as you begin to make a choice not to smoke?
- 10) Make a list of people with whom you frequently associate. Are most of them smokers or non-smokers? How can you begin to spend more time with people who are non-smokers?

Stress

Many adolescents perceive their lives as stressful and the ability to cope with life stressors can be challenging for teens. Stressors for teens include, but are not limited to, school demands, negative opinion of self, problems with friends, living environments, parental divorce, fighting and financial stressors (American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 2005). Teens can become overwhelmed with their stressors and unable to manage their stress (LaRue & Herrman, 2008).

Coping effectively with a specific stressor is the best way to evaluate if the adolescent is coping well. Two commonly used types of coping skills are known as problem-focused coping and engagement-focused coping. These types of coping skills are used when dealing with a stressful situation. Problem-focused coping includes seeking a way to solve the problem or stress and gain information about the stressor. Engagement coping includes problem solving but also utilizes emotional expression and support from others (Clarke, 2006). It is important for parents to be aware of their teen's coping abilities, and for the teen to identify their individual coping skills. Adults often downplay the level of stress adolescents experience and compare their adolescent years to current teens (LaRue & Harrman, 2008). Parents should encourage adolescents to have open dialogue about stressors, but should refrain from comparing their personal adolescent stress experiences with this generation of adolescent stressors.

Stress is not always situation specific, it can be long-term stress over a period of time. Long term stress can have a negative effect on the nervous system, wear out the body and leave a person feeling overwhelmed with a weakened immune system (Kids Health, n.d.). Experiencing large and extended periods of stress can lead to stress level overload. Some of the signs of stress overload include, but are not limited to, anxiety or panic, stomachaches, headaches, chest pain and difficulty sleeping (Kids Health, n.d.). Adolescents need to learn to deal with their stress levels before it becomes too much to deal with. Dealing with stress in a healthy manner can be empowering for the adolescent. These skills can be modeled and taught by parents and are useful throughout a person's life.

Adolescent stress has been associated with unhealthy behaviors such as smoking cigarettes, depression, high-risk sexual interactions, behavioral problems and suicide. Teens experience stress levels ranging from average to severe (LaRue & Herrman, 2008). Parents need to be aware of a teen's coping abilities, normal levels of behavior and stress and be able to identify changes, if they occur.

Some healthy ways for adolescents to decrease stress are to exercise, maintain a healthy diet, avoid alcohol and drugs, decrease negative self talk and opinions and build a network of supportive peers, friends and family members. It is also important to get a full night of sleep, to rebuild and strengthen the immune system.

Adolescents should proactively practice assertive coping skills, such as explaining feelings in a calm and appropriate manner and learn practical coping skills such as breaking up larger projects into smaller ones (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2006). Deep breathing, yoga, relaxation techniques, such as guided imagery, can help teens to manage their stress in a positive and productive way.

Visit these Website

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Helping Teenagers with Stress

<http://www.aacap.org>, search stress facts for families

Kids Health, Stress

http://kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/emotions/stress.html

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Helping Teenagers with Stress

<http://www.aacap.org>, search helping teenagers with stress

The American Institute of Stress, Stress Reduction, Stress Relievers

<http://www.stress.org/topic-reduction.htm>

FamilyDoctor.org, Teens and Stress: Who has Time for It?

<http://familydoctor.org>, search teens and stress

Key Words

Stress

Coping

Immune System

Problem-focused Coping

Engagement Coping

Determine Your Knowledge

Teen Stress Test

<http://www.lundrigan.org/connections/test.html>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Stress-o-meter

http://www.bam.gov/sub_yourlife/yourlife_stressometer.html#

Tesco, Stress Quiz

<http://www.tesco.com/health>, select healthy living, lifestyle quizzes and stress quiz

Family Discussions

- 1) List five healthy ways to deal with stress. Discuss implementing three of them into your daily life. Can these ideas be utilized by the entire family and if so, how?
- 2) Create a list of at least three personal traits that you identified about yourself when you are stressed. Do you treat others differently? Do you neglect yourself? Evaluate these personal traits and talk with your family about how you can improve.
- 3) Keep a personal journal and record your stress level on a scale of 1-5.

Evaluate your findings and share them with your family.

4) Do you feel adolescents have appropriate skills to deal with high levels of stress? Discuss your views.

5) Do you feel adolescents cope with stress and stressful events in a healthy or unhealthy manner? Share what you have seen peers and friends do to cope with stress.

6) What, if anything should schools and families do to support teens in combating stress?

7) Identify your positive attributes. What personal changes can you make in order to focus on your strengths and eliminate negative self-talk?

8) Create a list of behaviors or situations that will increase stress in your life. Invite your parents to dialogue with you about how to effectively avoid stressful situations.

9) Develop a calendar to help organize all your tasks, assignments and activities for the week or month. Share this with your family and discuss ways they can support you in lowering your stress level.

10) How can relatives be more supportive and helpful to you? Engage in constructive conversation with your family to consider their role.

Chapter 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Some major health issues facing this generation of teenagers include obesity, diabetes; sleep deficit, sexually transmitted diseases, smoking and stress. There is growing public concern that this generation will suffer severe consequences if lifestyle changes are not implemented nationwide. Educators, parents, and community groups that serve youth should initiate conversations about change and create ways to move toward healthier lifestyles. Families and children are at high risk and the problems are universal.

Organizations and media have begun to impact change. Efforts such as www.letsmove.gov and *We Can!* and CATCH are strong programs designed to help children, adolescents and families start thinking about ways to create healthier lifestyles. Incorporating healthy choices in to daily life is a great place to start making efforts and the ideas and resources provided by these organizations are easy to use and understand. The American Heart Association, the Star Sleeper Campaign and www.srtessfreekids.com are taking a closer look at younger generations and ways to help them achieve wellness through their websites. MTV, a well-known media outlet for younger generations, is also taking on the important task of educating youth. It's Your Sex Life is a comprehensive and educational website designed to promote thinking among teens about their sexual health.

They have taken on what some consider a sensitive topic and have encouraged teens to talk about their sexual activity and MTV promotes ways for teens to protect themselves.

The goal of this project is to provide adolescents and their parents with education and resources to help them make healthier choices. Each topic in this project is designed for schools to utilize on their web site as well as providing resources for students and families. The key terms are provided, so teens can become familiar with commonly used language associated with each topic and the web sites are provided to encourage additional education. Parents and adolescents can discuss and debate the family discussion questions together after visiting the web sites and create and implement changes they feel are applicable to their lives. Schools may find additional topics and resources to provide valuable information that is appropriate for the unique issues facing their student body population.

The self-assessment and activities outlined in this project pave the way to have a positive impact on adolescents and how they can learn about their health and personal needs. Adolescents should have a desire to take action and live a healthy life style. The current generation of teens face more challenges than previous generations in regards to health. Diet, physical activity and the risk of developing sexually transmitted infections are much greater then ever before.

Adolescents need to be aware of these risks and work to decrease risk factors contributing to an unhealthy life. Adopting a healthy life style, eating healthy food, engaging in regular exercise, abstaining from smoking and drugs use will contribute to adolescents living a long and healthy life. Teens choosing to engage in sexual activities need to protect themselves from the risk of sexually transmitted diseases and learn healthy ways to deal with stressors.

With this project, it is envisioned that schools will encourage adolescents to think about their own personal health and wellness. They will utilize the information that has been placed on their school web site. Parents and teens can then address each topic as they wish. Adolescents need to take a closer look at their health and begin to think about their future and what they want it to look like in terms of their health. Caring for one's own health is a highly personal and important task. Our society should encourage and promote this type of personal accountability.

The best way to understand adolescents is to listen to them. Parents and adults can learn more about teens by engaging in quality conversation and participating in reciprocal learning with them. Opening lines of communication around difficult topics is easier with adolescents when active listening techniques are employed. The lessons teens learn from their parents and significant adults vary greatly from the lessons learned in school.

Parents have an incredible opportunity to impact their child's life by helping them learn about topics that are not often addressed in the classroom setting. Parents are typically very influential and educate their child to care for themselves as well as others. The knowledge acquired from conversations, observations and following guidelines for a healthy lifestyle will empower the adolescent and parent to make better health choices resulting in a happy, healthy, and successful life.

Learning Expectations and Outcomes

- 1) Adolescents and parents will engage in reciprocal education on topics of mutual concern to support health and wellness.
- 2) Adolescents and parents will commit to making health and wellness related changes in the home.
- 3) Teens and parents will increase their understanding of health issues facing teens and will adopt preventative measures to reduce risks.
- 4) Web sites and references listed in this project will be utilized by parents and teens to further their knowledge of health and wellness topics.
- 5) Adolescents will be empowered to make healthy choices and lifestyle changes.
- 6) Teens will advocate for schools to adopt practices that promote a healthy lifestyle.
- 7) Communication among parents, teens and schools will improve based on the information and resources provided in this project.

8) A long-range outcome will be a decrease in adolescent risk related behaviors while simultaneously healthy behaviors will increase.

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