

health letter[®]

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Winter 2008

+ HEALTHY EATING for kids and teens

→ Children, especially younger ones, eat the food they find at home. Teens often eat better if you involve them in meal planning. Everyone benefits from eating a balanced diet. Here are some basic guidelines:

- Include plenty of fruits and vegetables. The ideal is five servings a day.
- Make it easy for kids to choose healthy snacks. Besides cut-up fruit and veggies, offer fat-free yogurt, peanut butter on celery or apple slices and low-fat cheese.
- Limit chips and candy but don't ban them completely.
- Make them "once in a while" foods.
- Avoid soda and fruit-flavored drinks. Serve water or milk instead.
- Start reading food labels and teach your kids to do it.
- Don't use food to show kids you love them. Instead, give them a hug or praise and spend time with them.



 **Having a 65th Birthday?** Are you turning 65? We have great news! Effective January 2008, MetroPlus offers Medicare. Please call **1-800-303-9626** for more information. You may be able to change from your current health insurance to Medicare very easily.

Cold Weather EATING

→As the temperature drops, we turn to comfort foods, which make us feel good but can be high in fat. We also spend more time indoors, where contact spreads germs that cause colds and flu. To avoid winter weight gain and boost our immune systems, follow these tips for healthy cold-weather eating:



TRIM FAT OFF MEAT OR CHICKEN. Replace animal fats like lard or butter with oils like olive or canola. Broil meats instead of frying them.



SWITCH TO LOW-FAT DAIRY PRODUCTS, including skim or low-fat milk. Pick soups that are broth-based instead of cream-based.



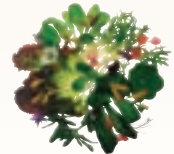
ORANGES, BROCCOLI AND RED PEPPERS are rich in vitamin C, which helps your body fight off infection. Eat at least one serving of a vitamin C-rich food daily.



AVOID FANCY COFFEE DRINKS. Most have lots of calories. Instead, choose black coffee or coffee with low-fat milk and sweetener.



EAT A VARIETY OF FOODS HIGH IN VITAMIN E, which boosts your immune system. Vitamin E is found in nuts, sunflower seeds and vegetable oils.



IF YOU EAT AT FAST FOOD SPOTS, select salads, turkey or chicken sandwiches without mayonnaise and whole-grain bagels. Limit pizza, burgers and fries.

Also, remember to eat and serve small portions. This way, you will get (and give) a taste of everything but no one will get overstuffed. Savor each mouthful. You will eat less and enjoy it more!

EATING WELL WITH GESTATIONAL DIABETES

→Pregnant women who have gestational diabetes need to plan meals carefully. Be careful not to overeat because that affects your blood sugar level. Try eating small meals two to three hours apart. This helps keep your blood sugar in a normal range. Do not skip meals and eat at about the same time every day. Remember to plan meals around work, shopping or other

activities. Read the Nutrition Facts label on food products for the carbohydrate count. High-carb foods have the biggest impact on your blood sugar.

You need about 2000 to 2400 calories daily. The actual amount depends on your age, weight before pregnancy and how active you are. Talk to your healthcare provider about the diet that's best for you.



MetroMom
The key to healthy babies

MAKE WEIGHT LOSS A Family Affair



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→ **Too many children** don't eat well and don't get enough exercise. Kids need to learn good health habits when they are young. Many conditions, like diabetes, high blood pressure and heart problems, start in childhood.

Changing habits does not have to mean "all or nothing." Small changes are easier to follow. Over time, little changes can make a big difference. And parents can help make that happen.

Parents can start by setting good examples. For example, they can stop buying and eating fattening snacks. They can use the stairs instead of elevators. They can watch less TV and be more active.

Parents can also set new rules to help kids stay healthy. Kids should

cut their TV time in half and use the rest of the time to play—outdoors if possible. When it comes to eating healthy, no one needs to give up snacks entirely. Instead, shift kids to healthy snacks like fresh fruit. Limit eating at fast-food restaurants. Gather the family for a meal that lasts at least thirty minutes, even if you manage to only once a week.

There are resources to help families get healthy. The Coney Island Healthy Eating and Lifestyles Program (H.E.L.P.) helps children and families deal with health and weight issues. We offer education. We also partner with community organizations to give kids easy access to gyms, swimming pools and neighborhood parks.

Help make the future healthy for your children. Eat and serve healthy foods and snacks to your family. Urge them to exercise, and get moving yourself.



Protect Your Family FROM LEAD

→ News about recalls of toys, toothpaste and pet foods containing lead has been in the headlines. Lead is a metal found in the earth. It is a poison. Lead can damage children's brains, stomachs and kidneys. Lead poisoning can lead to learning or hearing problems, headaches and slowed growth. Lead is also a danger for pregnant women.

Lead gets into our bodies in many ways. Lead dust on your hands can get into your mouth and then into your system. You can breathe in lead dust. Children may eat paint chips containing lead.

Your home could have lead in the water. You cannot see, smell or taste it. If you think your home has old plumbing that might have lead in it, dial 311 for the New York City Department of Health. They speak many languages.

Children should be tested for lead by their Primary Care Provider (PCP) at age 1 and again at age 2. If lead levels are high, ask what to do. Pregnant women should be screened for lead.



Set an example for your kids by eating and serving healthy foods and snacks.

YOU CAN QUIT SMOKING



→ **Smoking increases your risk** for lung cancer, heart disease and other illnesses. If you have diabetes or high blood pressure, smoking makes it worse. Pregnant smokers are more likely to miscarry or have a low-birth-weight baby.

If you still smoke, it's time to quit. Tell family, friends and co-workers about your plans. Ask anyone in your household who smokes to quit with you. Recognize high-risk places and situations. Hang out with people who don't smoke. Leave the table as soon as you finish eating. Drink water instead of coffee or alcohol. Walk around while you chat on the phone. Practice saying "no thanks, I don't smoke."

If you get the urge to smoke, call a friend instead. Keep your mouth busy

with sugarless gum, cinnamon sticks or straws. If you can hold out just a few minutes, the craving will pass.

Don't fuss over next week or next month. Focus on today. Every hour you don't smoke brings you closer to quitting for good. If you slip, don't give up. Figure out what made you smoke, and decide what you need to do the next time.

MetroPlus has a special program to help members quit smoking, find support groups and get information on where to get free patches, gum, lozenges and other nicotine replacement aids. If you would like to join, call Ann Allen: **(212) 908-8447**.

Updated Provider Directory

You can get the most recent MetroPlus Provider Directory either by mail or e-mail. If you want a copy, please call Customer Services: **1-800-303-9626**. Or visit our website at www.metroplus.org.

Reminders

- Do you have a hearing problem? If so, use a TTY machine to call Customer Services: **1-800-881-2812**.
- Every family member needs a complete physical exam once a year. Call your PCP to make an appointment for each person *now*.
- Did you move? Do you have a new phone number? If so, please call Customer Services: **1-800-303-9626**.

Site News & Notes

HHC facilities have begun a multi-year campaign to make patient safety a top priority. Every facility has a Patient Safety Officer. Staff is being trained. An awards program encourages competition and sharing of best practices.

Once again, many HHC doctors were part of *New York Magazine's* "Best Doctors in New York City." Doctors at **Bellevue, Jacobi, Kings County, Metropolitan** and **Queens hospitals** were included. MetroPlus congratulates all our wonderful providers.