

Healthy Weight

INITIATIVE

NEWSLETTER

DID YOU WASH YOUR HANDS TODAY?

Did you wash your hands today?

Frequent hand washing is the single most critical act we can do to eliminate the spread of germs and prevent illness. Think of all the things your hands encounter on a daily basis: door knobs, key boards, stair rails, light switches, grocery carts - the list goes on and on. Almost everything we touch carries germs. You cannot see, taste, or smell them. These disease causing microorganisms live on common, everyday surfaces. Properly washing your hands is the best way to fight germs and prevent illnesses such as the common cold, influenza, ear infections, and strep throat.

Stopping Germs at School

At school it is particularly important to teach our students, their families and faculty proper hand washing techniques. It is a critical aspect in improving the overall health of a school. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that over 22 million school days are lost annually due to common colds.

Children will better accept this life skill if taught at an early age. Adults can teach children verbally and by setting a good example. Hand washing can be made fun and should become second nature to the students.

Healthy Schools, Healthy People It's a SNAP!

This program focuses on making healthy hygiene a part of daily life at school. Both children and teachers want to be healthy and well all year long. With cold and flu

season in full swing, it is especially important to properly wash our hands at school. For more information, go to <http://www.itsasnap.org/snap/about.asp>. This grassroots, education-based program can improve health by making clean hands an integral part of the school day.

How to Properly Wash Your Hands

1. Use warm water and soap.
2. Rub hands together to work up a lather being sure to scrubbing around fingernails, in between fingers, both sides of hand, and wrist.
3. Wash for 20 seconds, about the length of time it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" or "Old McDonald."
4. Rinse hands off and dry with a clean towel.

*If soap and water are unavailable, alcohol based gels and wipes will kill germs as well.

When to Wash?

- Before eating or while preparing food.
- After going to the restroom.
- After petting or playing with animals.
- After blowing your nose, sneezing, or coughing.
- When leaving a doctor's office.
- After visiting with a sick friend or family member.
- After playing outside, doing chores, taking the trash out, gardening, etc.
- When there is visible dirt on your hands or under your nails.

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FOOD INSECURITY AND OBESITY PARADOX

Food insecurity is defined as limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate food. Household food insecurity may cause mothers and their children to experience a decline in health resulting in poor nutrition and stress related to obtaining a sufficient supply of food. Surprisingly, the impact of household food insecurity is contributing to an increase in obesity. This paradox is found to be linked to socioeconomic factors, the highest prevalence occurring among women and ethnic minorities; however, an even higher occurrence of food insecurity and obesity has been found in individuals and families of low socioeconomic status. This is due, in part, to the least expensive foods being high in calories and low in nutrients. Families with limited resources spend less on the costly foods, such as fruits and vegetables, and more on the least expensive, most affordable options. High calorie, less expensive foods are easy to over consume and cause weight gain.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1 in 5 children struggle with hunger in America and 48.8 million Americans, which include 16.2 million children, lack the resources to regularly put enough nutritious food on the table. Based on findings from the Food and Research Action Center, 20 million children are eligible for free or reduced price breakfast at school, but only 9.4 million children received these benefits within the 2009-2010 school year.

Who is at risk?

Households with incomes below the official poverty line
Households with children who are headed by a single female or male adult
Minority groups and the elderly

What are the consequences?

Children from food insecure families who receive insufficient nutrition:

- are vulnerable to a weakened immune system
- have a higher risk for illness
- are more likely to be behind in their academic development
- affects a child's ability to learn, grow, and fight infections

Research shows that children from a food insecure low income household are more likely to experience fatigue, irritability, and difficulty concentrating as compared to children from a food secure family. Research also shows that food insecurity is linked to grade repetition, absenteeism, tardiness, anxiety, aggression, poor math scores, psychosocial dysfunction, and difficulty with social

interactions. Food insecurity among children and youth is associated with greater weight gain.

Resources:

If a child or parent you know is struggling with food insecurity, food assistance programs are available.

- Food Distribution website (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/>)
This site includes information on food assistance programs for low income families and resources for schools.
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
Formerly Food Stamps, this program allows low income families to purchase qualifying foods. Visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/> for information on eligibility and benefits.
- Women, Infants, Children (WIC)
WIC provides supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non breastfeeding postpartum women as well as infants and children up to the age of 5. For more information visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/>.
- National School Lunch Program
A federal meal program that provides nutritious reduced cost or free lunches to children at school. For information visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/>.
- Food Bank
Food banks distribute food and other donated products to low income families and/or individuals. Contact your local food bank for more information or visit <http://www.afoodbanks.org/> to find your local food bank.

How can we help?

Get involved in the fight against hunger. The National Coalition for the Homeless and the National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness co-sponsor the National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week which is held each year one week before Thanksgiving. Schools, communities, and cities partake in this week as a nationwide effort to bring awareness to the problems of hunger and homelessness. For more information visit www.nationalhomeless.org/projects/awareness/index.html.

NoKidHungry, part of the No Kid Hungry Campaign, is a national effort to end child hunger in America by 2015. Young kids, parents, and teachers organize and participate in volunteer activities and advocacy efforts to raise awareness of childhood hunger in schools and neighborhoods. For more information visit www.NoKidHungry2.org.

SCALE BACK ALABAMA

Scale Back Alabama is a statewide weight-loss contest that encourages Alabamians to lose weight, exercise and have fun while doing it. The campaign is for adults and is primarily operated with the help of local employers (companies with 10 employees or more), hospitals and health departments. Each organization appoints a coordinator, this individual will have access to a comprehensive toolkit with everything needed for hosting a contest locally and serving as a weigh-in site.

Schools can get involved and become a Scale Back Alabama School. The Scale Back Alabama School program targets school personnel to encourage

participation in Scale Back Alabama. It gives school personnel the opportunity to work in teams to achieve a healthy lifestyle while being a positive role model for their students. Schools with five or more teams that take part in Scale Back Alabama are eligible to become a Scale Back School. They receive special recognition and are entered in a separate school drawing for prizes that promote good nutrition and physical activity behaviors for the students.

We want to welcome the Governor's Commission on Physical Fitness as a new partner in the Scale Back Alabama School program. The Scale Back Alabama School program appreciates their support of this worthwhile program. For



more information, visit www.adph.org/nutrition, click on Scale Back Alabama or www.scalebackalabama.com.

*When: January 23-27, 2012
(weigh in week)*

Where: Statewide

Hand Washing, continued from page 1

Did you know?

- Some viruses and bacteria can live 20 minutes to 2 or more hours on surfaces.
- Your dominant hand tends to get under washed compared to the other. For example, if you are right handed you will better wash your left hand and vice versa.
- Women tend to wash their hands more than men do after using the restroom.
- The germs on your hands double after using the restroom.

Handling Food

- Wash your hands before, during, and after preparing a meal. There are germs on our skin, hair, and nails; hand washing will help prevent any germs being passed to the food.
- Cross contamination of undercooked or raw foods such as raw eggs and meat can lead to food poisoning such as Salmonella and E. coli. Any time raw meats or eggs are handled, wash everything it comes in contact with such as cutting boards, counter tops, and cooking utensils.
- The five second rule doesn't work when deciding whether or not to eat food that was just dropped on the ground. The food will become contaminated with bacteria as soon as it touches the surface of another area. Throwing it away and getting a new clean bite is your best option.

More Resources:

- Resources for School <http://adph.org/pandemicflu/index.asp?ID=649>
- Seasonal Flu Information for Schools & Childcare Providers <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/index.htm>
- Handwashing: Clean Hands Save Lives <http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/>
- Scrub Club <http://www.scrubclub.org/home.aspx>



BRINGING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INDOORS

The winter season is here and with it brings some not so welcome guests, whether they be germs or unwanted pounds on the waist. The cold weather has a tendency to keep us bundled up inside where it is warm and cozy. However, this type of behavior (along with all of the delicious holiday foods) can lead to unintentional weight gain. We often find ourselves making excuses as to why we can't exercise, and this happens throughout the year, not just the winter. Unfortunately, we tend to make more excuses when it is cold outside because it is too frigid to take a jog around the neighborhood or spend time playing catch with the kids in the yard. Luckily, there are many activities that can help you and the kids burn extra calories indoors, while staying warm!

- Wii and XBox Kinect are great technological advancements in the area of fitness. There are great games, fitness tests, and even yoga and strength training activities that can be customized to your needs. Video games aren't just for kids anymore, these activities can help burn extra calories while keeping you entertained for hours!
- Cleaning can be an excellent way to get everyone active inside. Let's face it, the house usually needs a good cleaning after the holidays, and what better way than to team up and get cleaned and organized! Turn on some fun music throughout the house, and give each person a room or two to clean. Give your child a feather duster instead of a rag, and hide little sugar-free candies or quarters behind the picture frames and between couch cushions to make sure the job gets done (and remember to keep count of how many are found!)
- Group exercise classes at a gym may be helpful if encouragement from others is needed to get you moving. There are many varieties of classes, so you are very likely

to find one that fits your personal style. Some examples include: Zumba, Spin, Yoga, Kick-Boxing, Step, Mind & Body, and Indoor Water classes. Even if you don't want to buy a month membership, a lot of gyms offer the class for around \$5 for a single visit.

- Try a scavenger hunt through the house! Include phrases like "hop on one foot to the place where the yellow fruit is kept" and "dance to the place you get clean". Adding these specifics will help to increase the physical activity.
- More ideas: Play charades, hoola hoop, jump rope, or build a fort. Dancing can also be fun while burning off some calories.

Fight those winter blues by getting creative and staying active! You will feel better about yourself the more physically active you become. For more information on getting active, visit <http://www.letsmove.gov/get-active>.



DIETARY AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PRACTICES OF AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS – RESEARCH STUDY BY AUBURN UNIVERSITY

Dr. Sareen S. Gropper, RD, LD is a dietitian and faculty member in the Auburn University Department of Nutrition, Dietetics, and Hospitality Management. She is studying the dietary and physical activity practices of children in after school programs.

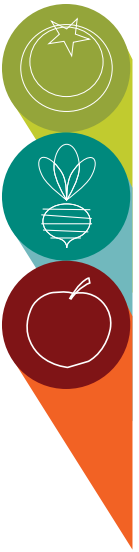
We are pleased to announce that the 21st Century Learning Centers

at Reeltown School and Dadeville Elementary School are participating in the study. The children will be observed periodically to see their level of activity and snack habits. Their weight and height will be measured confidentially, with the parent's permission. There are no costs associated with the study and as a bonus, each student will receive

a pedometer to wear during the project and will be able to take it home at the completion of the study.

The study is still in need of programs to participate. If your program is interested in getting involved in this important research study, please contact Dr. Gropper at 334-844-3271 or gropss@auburn.edu.

Healthy Weight Initiative
Alabama Department of Public Health
The RSA Tower
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Montgomery, AL 36130



NEWS AND EVENTS

UNITY WITH A PURPOSE: NUTRITION AND HEALTHY EATING

The Birmingham Metro Diversity Coalition (BMDC) will sponsor its Martin Luther King Jr. Unity Walk to raise awareness of nutritional disparities in the Greater Birmingham Area. The walk is free and begins at noon at Railroad Park. The outer loop walking trail at the park is approximately 3/4 of a mile.

Interested individuals or teams may register online www.birminghammetrodiversitycoalition.org. Walkers should arrive at the main assembly point by 11:30 a.m. for an opening ceremony, and the walk begins at 12 p.m.

When: January 14, 2012

Where: Railroad Park, 1600 First Avenue North, Birmingham

What time: Noon

OBESITY TASK FORCE

Attend the state obesity task force meeting to network with partners from across the state who are working on obesity issues in adults and youth. Learn about programs and strategies that create healthier lifestyles and environments. Task force meetings are open to the public.

When: February 28, 2012

Where: Alabama Power Company, Clanton

What time: 9:00am until noon

NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH® – GET YOUR PLATE IN SHAPE

National Nutrition Month® is a nutrition education and information campaign created annually in March by the American Dietetic Association. The campaign focuses attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits

Visit www.eatright.org/nnm for more information and resources to promote National Nutrition Month®.

When: March 2012

Where: Nationwide

