



FORWARD CORNER

Addressing the Racial and Ethnic Disparity in Childhood Obesity

The rate of obese and overweight black and brown children exceeds that of their white counterparts and here in DuPage County we are seeing these differences in children as young as two years of age. Twenty one percent of the Hispanic children enrolled in WIC (ages 2-4) are obese compared to 11% of their non-Hispanic peers. There are a number of factors (genetics, culture, environment and more) that put these young children at risk. In a new white paper released by FORWARD, titled *Practical Ways to Address and Overcome the Racial and Ethnic Disparity in Childhood Obesity*, we explore this topic in detail. [Click here for a copy.](#) As educators and advocates for young children, we encourage you to share with all families tips to reduce obesity in young children (see the list under the January Call to Action for Families). But, for your Hispanic families we suggest sharing these additional tips.

- Enter pregnancy at a healthy weight and maintain a healthy weight throughout pregnancy
- Breastfeed exclusively for six months; refrain from introducing solid foods before six months; do not offer juice to an infant in their first year; and commit to no added sugar for the first two years.
- Discuss with your pediatrician a healthy weight for your child and challenge the myth that “a chubby baby is a healthy baby”
- Talk with your child’s caregivers (who may be a grandparent or relative) about the importance of maintaining a healthy weight through the early years and what healthy habits support this.
- Revisit culture and traditions to be sure your beliefs and food preferences do not negatively affect your children’s health. Adopt healthy habits around food, activity, screen time, sleep and stress.
- Find ways to make traditional Hispanic cuisine healthier, using more fruits and vegetables, whole wheat flour, low fat cheeses, lean meats and limited but healthy fats.
- Make sure your child is active for at least two hours a day.

Next month, as we celebrate Black History Month, we will share specific tips African American families can adopt as they confront the disparity in childhood obesity.

JOIN THE HEALTHY MOVEMENT TODAY BY TAKING ACTION!

January Call to Action for Families: The new year is always a time to recommit to healthy living. Start small by adding one healthy habit for each week in January.). To get started, consider these tips and build from there: *Prepare and eat meals together as a family at least five times a week: Add a fruit or vegetable to every meal. Replace refined grains with whole grains on most days. Limit soda or juice to no more than 2 times a week. Stop using food as a reward and introduce other options. Be physically active daily as a family on at least three days (and build to seven). Get outside as a family at least two times a week during the winter. Limit screen time to 2 hours per day (on all school days). Be a role model for your child. Brainstorm additional ideas with your family or check out www.forwarddupage for ideas.*

January Call to Action for Early Childhood Providers: Register for *Addressing the Race and Ethnic Disparity in Childhood Obesity*, a YWCA/FORWARD free training offered via ZOOM on 2/24/22 from 6:30-8:30. The training will explore factors that contribute to this disproportionate rate of obesity among Black and Hispanic children, examine practical tips to share with families to mitigate the risks and conclude with how to get information out to families. We hope to see you there.

For information on healthy eating and activity initiatives in DuPage, check out www.forwarddupage.org.