

May 9, 2005

Healthy Weights for Young Children Campaign Phase Two

- The *Healthy Weights for Young Children* campaign promotes simple changes parents can make to their family lives to achieve healthy weights. It focuses on healthy eating, being active and self-esteem.
- Phase 2 of the campaign continues to encourage parents to be healthy role models (as promoted in Phase one, March 2005) and focuses on the fact that family members tend to prefer similar food choices and physical activity interests. (K.K. Davidson et al., 2002)
- This two-phased campaign was developed collaboratively by Toronto Public Health and Peel Region Health Department. Phase one will be repeated in the fall.
- The early years are the time of greatest human development and the time when adults have the most profound influence on a child's future well-being. (McCain and Mustard, 1999)
- The National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (2002) found that in 1998/ 99 over one third of Canadian children aged two to 11 were overweight and of these, half were classified as obese.
- The Framingham Children's Study (2000) found that a child's early eating experiences are negatively influenced by parents who restrict their own food to control weight. Parents may impose excessive control over their child's diet while modeling inappropriate eating behaviours that may contribute to an increased risk for obesity in children.
- Children who eat meals with their families tend to have healthier eating habits. (Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health Annual Report, 2004)
- Parents need to be conscious of their own role-modeling of body attitudes to young children as they readily absorb the adult ideals and beliefs concerning body shape. (M. Tiggermann, 2001)
- Girls as young as age five may be aware of how their fathers perceive their body shape, and those perceptions can impact how daughters see themselves. (K.K. Davidson et al., 2001)
- Parents who are physically active are more likely to have preschool-aged children who are physically active. Children of active mothers are twice as likely to be active as children of inactive mothers. Children of active fathers are 3.5 times as likely to be active. And when both parents are active, children are 5.8 times as likely to be active. (L.L. Moore et al., 1991)
- Physical activity patterns have been shown to continue throughout childhood, so it is important to establish an active lifestyle beginning very early in childhood. (L.L. Moore et al., 2003)
- The *Healthy Weights for Young Children* campaign is part of the Early Child Development Nutrition project undertaken by Toronto Public Health and is 100% funded by the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services.