

FORWARD CORNER

September is Childhood Obesity Awareness Month

About 1 in 5 children in the United States has obesity. **National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month** provides us a chance to learn more about this serious health condition. Recent studies suggest that the COVID 19 pandemic (resulting in-school closures and social distancing) will exacerbate childhood obesity. Why? Traditional early childhood and school environments provide structure and routine around mealtimes, physical activity and sleep -- three predominant lifestyle factors implicated in obesity risk. But during the pandemic, children may be missing these traditional environments/programs. They are operating under a different set of experiences and expectations. [Science Daily](#) makes these observations:

- As households stocked up on shelf-stable foods, they appear to be purchasing ultra-processed and calorie-dense comfort foods (both can lead to excessive weight gain).
- Social distancing and stay at home orders reduce the opportunities for exercise, particularly for children in urban areas living in small apartments.
- With limited options during social distancing/isolation, it's likely that children spend more time in sedentary activities and in screen time: the data shows video game sales are soaring.
- Screen time is associated with experiencing overweight/obesity in childhood, likely because of the dual issues of sedentary time and the association between screen time and snacking.

To help children maintain a healthy weight during the pandemic, early childhood providers can be a resource to families:

- Share with families [this link](#) between stay at home and child weight gain.
- Share with families links to farmers markets, school lunch program pickups/deliveries, food depositories, and [My Plate](#) best practices for shopping, saving money and cooking during the pandemic.
- Share with families the need to make physical education a priority during a pandemic, sharing your best ideals for [at-home physical activity](#) and/or links to Go Noodle [streaming activity programs](#).
- Stress the importance of getting screen time back under control---two or fewer hours of screen time is all that is recommended for young children. The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry has some [great tips](#).

JOIN THE HEALTHY MOVEMENT TODAY!

Families: Return to the 5.4.3.2.1 Go!®. Daily Recommendations: 5 fruits and vegetables, 4 servings of water, 3 servings of low-fat dairy, 2 or fewer hours of physical activity and 1 or more hours of physical activity.

Early Childhood Providers: Stay connected to your families who are isolating, working from home, or furloughed by sending an email reminding them to stay focused on their child's weight and health. Share the information from this newsletter.

Strengthen Your Credibility as a Nutrition and Physical Activity Resource to Families: There are still eight slots in FORWARD DuPage's Healthy Child Care Project. If you are interested in assessing your early childhood program/home/center, getting FREE individualized coaching, FREE on-site technical assistance, and FREE materials for your program, we encourage you to register for NAP SACC training offered by the YWCA and FORWARD. Download the application [here](#).

For information on FORWARD, including free webinars and resources, click [here](#).