

FORWARD CORNER

September is National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month

One in seven students in DuPage County are obese and many more are overweight. Childhood obesity puts children at risk for health problems like type II diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease, bone and joint problems and some cancers. Children who are obese are also more likely to be bullied and teased by their peers, leaving them socially isolated and more likely to suffer from depression and lower self-esteem.

During September, **National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month**, FORWARD DuPage (Fighting Obesity and Reaching Health Weight among Residents of DuPage) encourages early childhood (and school-age) providers, children and families to make healthy changes together. Consider these best practices and tips:

- Focus on healthy eating with an emphasis on lean proteins, whole grains, fruits and vegetables and low-fat dairy. Strive for five or more servings daily of fruits and vegetables: they should make up half of your plate at each meal. Make water your “beverage of choice”.
- Work together to make sure children get up to 120 minutes of physical activity a day: plan for a mix of unstructured play and structured center or family activities. Make sure some of it is vigorous!
- Limit screen time to no more than two hours per day. Replace time spent in front of a television or computer with reading, play and physical activities, (run, walk, bike, swim, climb/swing/slide/hang, dance, garden, sports play, creative play and so on).
- Prepare healthy meals, served family style, and engage in pleasant conversation around the table. The benefits of “family meals” are well-documented.

For more information on childhood obesity and prevention tips and strategies, link here:

- Childhood Obesity in DuPage County <http://www.dupagehealth.org/upload/DuPageObesity2017.pdf>
- FORWARD DuPage and its obesity fighting efforts <http://www.forwarddupage.org/early-childhood.html>
- Childhood Obesity Awareness <https://www.cdc.gov/features/childhoodobesity/index.html>
- Tip sheets for families (calories needed each day, back to school health tips, healthy families, etc.) <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/wecan/tools-resources/parent-tip-sheets.htm>
- Benefits of the Family Table <https://thefamilydinnerproject.org/about-us/benefits-of-family-dinners/>
- GO NAP SACC for centers: www.gonapsacc.org