

Food & Fun After School ~ 2nd Edition ~

Parent Communications Unit 3: Be Sugar Smart

About Parent Engagement

Engaging with families in after school time is associated with increased family involvement in children's education and school, improved relationships between parents and children, and improved implementation and outcomes for afterschool programs*.

This Parent Communication packet contains Parent Engagement Activities, a Newsletter Article, and an Email Message for you to use with each Food & Fun unit. These tools are intended to help you connect with and educate parents on the key messages in Food & Fun.

It is important to engage parents on a regular basis in a variety of ways. Here are some ways that programs have engaged parents at after school:

- Have a conversation with parents at pick up
- Create a bulletin board with the key messages from each Food & Fun unit
- Involve parents in daily physical activities and snack time
- Hold regularly scheduled events each month

(*Focus on Families! How to Build and Support Family-Centered Practices in After School. A Joint Publication of: United Way of Massachusetts Bay, Harvard Family Research Project, and Build the Out-Of-School Time Network.)

Parent Engagement Activities

Experiment and be creative- come up with your own ideas or modify the activities below to engage parents at your after school program!

- **Display how you “Pour It Out”.** Do the activity “Pour It Out” from the Food & Fun 2nd edition curriculum. Display the cups of children's usual intake of juice and the standard 6 ounce serving by the sign-out book. Talk to parents about the activity you did with the children and what the visuals mean.
- **Do a flavored water taste test.** Offer parents water infused with cucumber, oranges, lemons or mint. Suggest trying it at home and experiment with other fruits and flavors!

Newsletter Article

Use this article in your organization's publications. Be sure to include the credit "Provided by Harvard Prevention Research Center on Nutrition and Physical Activity and YMCA of the USA."

Sugar is Sweet—and Drinks are Too?

What is the largest source of added sugar in children's diets? It's not cake or candy—it is drinks sweetened with sugar! Children are drinking more soda, fruit drinks, punch and sports drinks than ever before. The added sugars in these drinks provide little to no nutrients for growing bodies. Drinking sugar-sweetened drinks increases a child's chance of becoming overweight and getting dental cavities.

This month our program will teach kids how to be "sugar smart"! They will learn about the amount of sugar in different drinks, and how to make healthier drink choices.

The key messages for parents are:

- Sugar-sweetened drinks like soda, juice drinks, and sports drinks are the top source of added sugar in kid's diets.
- Drinking sugar-sweetened drinks can cause cavities and increase the risk for overweight in kids and adults.
- Water and low fat milk are the best drinks to offer during snack and meal times.
- Juice can have just as much sugar as soda. Do not serve juice drinks and limit 100% juice to 4 oz. per day (juice box size).

The key messages we'll be teaching kids are:

- Sweetened drinks such like soda, fruit drinks, and sports drinks are loaded with sugar.
- Eating and drinking too much sugar is not healthy for your body and it can cause cavities.
- Water and low fat milk are the best drinks to have at snacks and meals.
- Juice is not as healthy as it seems. It can have as much sugar as soda.

Our goal is to help children drink fewer sweetened beverages and eat fewer sweets.

Children (and parents!) often don't realize how much sugar is added to drinks. Teaching kids that sugary drinks are unhealthy can help them make healthier choices as they get older. With so many sugary products available, setting a good example at home is more important than ever. Be a good role model- don't serve sugar-sweetened drinks at home!

Tips for Success

- **Serve water or milk.** Serve your children water or low fat milk during snack and meal times.
- **Do not buy drinks with added sugars.** Read the drink labels and buy drinks without added sugars. Sometimes sugar is listed as sucrose, high fructose corn syrup, dextrose, or fruit juice from concentrate. Don't be fooled- they are all just sugar!
- **Set limits.** Limit soda and other sugary drinks to one 8-ounce serving per week.
- **Skip the sports drinks.** Water is the best drink for active kids. Sports drinks are only helpful for intense activities that last longer than 1 hour. For example, a day at basketball camp or a hike in the mountains would be a time that kids might have a sports drink.
- **Try naturally sweet.** Serve snacks your kids could enjoy in the place of high-sugar options: fresh, frozen, or dried fruit, granola, or low-sugar cereals (5-10 grams per serving).

For more information on healthy drinks, check out <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/healthy-drinks/>

Email Message:

Use this sample message to communicate with parents by email.

Subject line: Healthy Habits Power Tips—Be Sugar Smart

Dear (insert program name) Parents:

This month children at the (*insert program name*) will learn about the amount of sugar in some drinks, and how to make healthier drink choices.

The key messages for parents are:

- Sugar-sweetened drinks like soda, juice drinks, and sports drinks are the top source of added sugar in kid's diets.
- Drinking sugar-sweetened drinks can cause cavities and increase the risk for overweight in kids and adults.
- Water and low fat milk are the best beverages to offer during snack and meal times.
- Juice can have just as much sugar as soda. Do not serve juice drinks and limit 100% juice to 4 oz. per day (juice box size).

The key messages for kids are:

- Sweetened drinks such like soda, fruit drinks, and sports drinks are loaded with sugar.
- Eating and drinking too much sugar is not healthy for your body and it can cause cavities.
- Water and low fat milk are the best drinks to have at snacks and meals.
- Juice is not as healthy as it seems. It can have as much sugar as soda.

Our goal is to help children drink fewer sweetened beverages and eat fewer sweets.

You can support this goal by reinforcing the key messages at home, and by following these **Healthy Habits Power Tips**:

- **Serve water or milk.** Serve your children water or low fat milk during snack and meal times.
- **Do not buy drinks with added sugars.** Read the drink labels and buy drinks without added sugars. Sometimes sugar is listed as sucrose, high fructose corn syrup, dextrose, or fruit juice concentrate. Don't be fooled- they are all just sugar!
- **Set limits.** Limit soda and other sugary drinks to one 8-ounce serving per week.
- **Save the sports drinks.** Sports drinks are only helpful for intense activities that last longer than 1 hour. For example, a day at basketball camp or a hike in the mountains would be a time that kids might have a sports drink.
- **Try naturally sweet.** Serve snacks your kids could enjoy in the place of high-sugar options: fresh, frozen, or dried fruit, granola, or low-sugar cereals (5-10 grams per serving).

Want to learn more? For more information on healthy drinks, click on <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/healthy-drinks/>