



Family and Consumer Sciences Extension

— *Nutrition and Exercise 2003*

Putting Knowledge to Work for Georgia Families

The University of Georgia

Cooperative Extension Service

The Problem

- At least five of the top ten causes of death are related to what people eat (American Diabetes Association).
- According to a recent report released by the Georgia Department of Human Resources, only about a fourth of Georgians report being regularly active and another fourth are totally inactive outside of work. The report estimated that lack of regular physical exercise caused 32% of all heart disease in Georgia; 18% of all cases of high blood pressure; 32% of all cases of stroke; 18% of all cases of diabetes; and 32% of all cases of falls due to osteoporosis. According to the Georgia DHR, many Georgians are at risk for diabetes mainly due to inactivity and obesity.
- Obesity in American children, adolescents and adults continues to increase. Approximately 14% of children, 12% of adolescents and over 55% of adults are overweight or obese (Journal of American Medical Association, 2001). A recent study of the incidence of obesity in this country found that Georgia had the greatest increase in the number of individuals considered overweight when compared to other states. The incidence doubled between 1991 and 1998 (Georgia DHR Physical Activity Report 2001).
- Between 1986 and 2000, prevalence of severe obesity quadrupled.
- According to the 2003 Georgia County Guide, heart disease was the main cause of deaths in Georgia and accounted for 27.1% of the deaths in 2001.
- Direct and indirect costs due to overweight and obesity to US economy is estimated to be \$117 billion in 2000.

Research-based Solutions

- Research has shown work place activity programs reduce health care costs by 20-55%; cut short-term sick leave by 6-32% and increase productivity.
- Individuals who have the most information about nutrition have better diets.
- Body weight has less influence on morbidity and mortality if a person is physically fit.
- Reduction in risk for chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and osteoporosis is difficult without regular physical activity.
- If people who are overweight will lose about 5-7 percent of their body weight and exercise 30 minutes per day for five or more days a week, about 60% of those at high risk for getting diabetes would not develop it.
- CDC estimates that increased regular moderate activity in those over 15 years could reduce annual direct medical costs by as much as \$76.6 million.

Extension's Role

- Conduct nutrition and exercise educational programs to make adults aware of their risk factors for heart disease and how their eating and exercise habits can be modified to decrease their risks.
- Lead the *Walk-a-weigh* program, a 10-12 week weight-control program which emphasizes exercise.
- Use the *WIN Kids* lessons to prevent overweight and obesity in children age 10-13.

Extension's Contribution to Solving the Problem

- Provided nearly 248,550 hours of nutrition education to 83,054 Georgians.
- Nearly 463 Nutrition and exercise extension programs were conducted for over 6,000 adults and youths.
- Provided healthy lifestyle education by media to thousands of Georgians; food, nutrition and exercise-related articles in newsletters reached over 403,000 people; exhibits reached nearly 82,800 individuals; radio spots were broadcast to a listening audience of over 3million; newspaper columns went to a circulation of over 5million readers and television programs were targeted to over 2million people.

Impact on Georgians

- The comparison of pre and post evaluations of the children who participated in the *Building Healthy Bodies* extension program significantly improved their food and nutrition knowledge. Above 80% of the children who completed the program increased their ability to identify foods from the five food groups of the Food Guide Pyramid.
- The comparison of pre and post evaluation data shows that most of the participants who completed the *Walk-A-Weigh* nutrition and exercise extension program significantly improved their dietary and exercise habits. For example, 51% of the participants started the habit of doing exercise at least three times a week for 30 minutes at a time; 63% made a conscious effort to limit fat to 30% of total calories; 67% started eating at least three vegetables each day; 60% started eating low-fat snacks and desserts; 55% started to trim fat from meat to reduce fat intake; 63% modified recipes to lower fat by using low-fat ingredients; and 58% started to read nutrition labels to help make healthy food choices.
- Over 60% of the participants improved at least 12 dietary habits leading to improve their health. Nearly 49% of the participants improved their exercise habits. Almost 96% the participants improved their overall diet and health behavior.
- Follow up clinical and medical data of *Walk-A-Weigh* participants show that the six-week extension program significantly helped them improve their health condition by reducing risk factors. For example, 85% of the participants were able to reduce their excess body weight by an average of 5 pounds; 67% were able to decrease their blood glucose level; 56% were able to reduce high blood pressure; and 45% were able to decrease their total cholesterol level.

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