



Eco-Healthy Child Care®



Eco-Healthy Child Care® helps early childhood learning environments to be as healthy, safe and green as possible by reducing children's exposure to toxic chemicals.

Improving Nutrition and Promoting Exercise

Health Concerns

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the rate of children becoming overweight has increased rapidly over the past twenty years. Preschool aged children (2-5 yrs old) weigh more than the same age group did 30 years ago. Almost 1 in 4 preschoolers are either overweight or at risk for becoming overweight. So, do your part to ensure children are active and eating right!

Choose organic or sustainable foods when you can. Organic certification means that no growth hormones, antibiotics, synthetic pesticides or genetically modified ingredients were used to grow or process the food.

Switch to nonfat dairy products and limit meats in children's diets. Saturated fat found in animal products is a major contributor to heart disease later in life. Avoiding animal fats reduces exposure to toxins that accumulate in fat, like dioxins and PCBs. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends non-fat or low-fat dairy for children after age two. Healthy fats include nuts, seeds, olives, avocados, flaxseed and wheat germ.

Serve more "real food." Read labels and make or choose foods with ingredients you recognize. Choosing foods with fewer ingredients will help you avoid added salt, sugar, fats, dyes and other artificial additives.

Avoid high fructose corn syrup. This additive is found in many processed and packaged foods. Recent studies suggest it could expose kids to mercury, a neurotoxin. Avoiding corn syrup will reduce exposure to pesticides and genetically modified ingredients, and also reduce empty calories.

Replace fruit juice with water and a piece of whole fruit. Fruit juice provides calories with little nutrition and contributes to cavities. Whole fruit is nutrient-rich and a great source of fiber. Water is free and healthy. The money you don't spend on juice can help offset the cost of local and organic produce.

Buy from local sources. Locally grown fruits and vegetables are likely to have higher nutrient levels because they can get to market quickly (produce loses nutrients every day after harvest). If fresh is out of season, then frozen local produce is a good choice.

Grow your own! Whether in a windowsill planter or a full-blown garden, growing herbs or vegetables is a simple way to save money, avoid pesticides, and help kids learn where their food comes from. Nothing tastes better than veggies and fruit picked fresh from your garden!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Call: 202-543-4033, ext. 13

Email: info@ecohealthychildcare.org

Visit: www.cehn.org/ehcc

Avoid canned products. Most cans are lined with BPA, a toxic chemical that can leach into food and be a health risk for children. Choose fresh, frozen or dried options for beans, pasta, fruits and veggies. If you have to use canned, inquire whether the lining is BPA-free.

Never microwave or cook with plastic even if it is labeled “microwave safe.” When plastic is heated, it can leach toxic chemicals like BPA and phthalates into food.

Buy safer cookware. When scratched, old or overheated, Teflon and other non-stick coating can leach toxic chemicals into food. Cast iron may be more expensive, but it is safer and more durable. When buying dishware, look for safer plastics like #4 & #5. Also consider stainless steel pitchers, ceramics with non-lead coatings, and thick Pyrex bowls and plates.

Keep children active. Children learn by example. Be active with children to show them it’s fun and important. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that children should be physically active for a least 60 minutes a day.

- Go on a walk. Go biking. Make up a dance. Play

on the playground. Kick or throw a ball. Play tag. Practice tumbling. Run around the yard!

- Ensure children are using appropriate safety equipment such as: helmets, body pads and closed-toe, sturdy shoes.
- Be sure to closely monitor children with asthma or exercise induced asthma.



Nutrition and Physical Activity Resources

1. Environmental Working Group. Shopper’s Guide to Pesticides: the Dirty Dozen. Available at www.foodnews.org/methodology.php.
2. American Academy of Pediatricians & American Heart Association. 2006. Dietary recommendations for children and adolescents: A guide for practitioners. *Pediatrics* 117(2). Available at www.pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/abstract/117/2/544.
3. Review of recent studies comparing phytochemical levels in organic versus conventional foods. In Still No Free Lunch: Nutrient levels in US food supply eroded by pursuit of high yields. The Organic Center. Halweil, Brian. 2007. Available at www.organic-center.org/reportfiles/Yield_Nutrient_Density_Final.pdf.
4. National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/physicalactivity/index.htm>

A recipient of EPA’s Children’s Environmental Health Excellence Award in 2006, Eco-Healthy Child Care® (EHCC) is a national program that seeks to improve the environmental health of children by partnering with child care professionals to eliminate or reduce environmental health hazards found in child care facilities. Originally created by the Oregon Environmental Council in 2005, EHCC is now managed by Children’s Environmental Health Network.

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