



February Healthy Hints from the School Nurse

While February is traditionally the time to celebrate Valentine's Day, Brookside Place is featuring heart and dental health this month. Along with guest speakers on the topics, there will be various activities and displays to highlight healthy lifestyles.

Did you know that the average heart beats 100,000 times each day? When you consider that it pumps 24/7, it is an organ that is worth time and attention. Start your kids now with heart healthy habits:

- Encourage your kids to turn off their gadgets and be more active; it is estimated that 8 - 18 year olds spend four hours watching TV and two hours at a computer each day.
- Remind your kids that being active doesn't have to mean panting and sweating. They just need to move: walk to school, take the stairs, park at the far reaches of a parking lot, help with yard work (my personal favorite!), or just play outside. Remember Cranford has the best treadmill in the area - Nomahegan Park trail!
- Introduce a variety of fruits and vegetables. The nutrients in the plants help fight cardiovascular disease. Leave them on the counter in plain sight or cut them up and leave in the refrigerator so they are ready to eat.
- Teach them about heart healthy fats. "Bad fats" are solid at room temperature (butter, lard, fats from meat, creams); heart healthy oils include walnuts, almonds, olive oil and olives.
- Serve low fat proteins such as low fat milk, chicken, lean beef and fish. You can introduce skim or low fat milk gradually by mixing it with whole milk.
- Help them manage stress. Stomach aches, headaches, extreme emotions, trouble sleeping or eating could be signs of stress. Planned down time, like yoga and exercise, are great stress reducers.

Did you know that tooth enamel is the hardest part of your body? Fact is, if you don't floss you miss cleaning 40 percent of your teeth! Help your kids get on track to a lifelong healthy smile by starting good habits early. Dental care should begin as soon as teeth appear, but it is never too late to start.

- Help your kids brush twice a day until you are certain that they have mastered the coordination to do a thorough job on their own.
- Flossing is especially challenging, so helping them with this task will ensure it is done correctly.
- After the age of six years, fluoride toothpaste is encouraged.

- Offer water and naturally sweet snacks like fruit or nuts and cheese instead of sugary drinks and sweet, sticky snacks.
- If there is a lot of snacking, kids should brush in between meals as well since snacks can lead to tooth decay.
- See a dentist regularly as soon as the first teeth have erupted.

This month Brooksidians are encouraged to think about heart and dental health. Attached are forms they can complete and return to me for a chance to win this month's raffle. I will also post them in the halls.

Extra reminders:

- ❖ Please call the absence line if your child will be absent and give a reason for absence - 908-709-6246.
- ❖ If your child has a fever or is vomiting, please keep him or her home for 24 hours, fever or symptom free without the use of fever reducing medication.
- ❖ Please clear your voicemail and update contact information as needed.
- ❖ Please be sure your child is dressed appropriately as time outdoors is the preferred option for recess.

Have a great month of celebrations!

~ Paula O'Hara, Brookside Place School Nurse