

**MEDIA ADVISORY**

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October is Child Health Awareness Month

In October, celebrate Child Health Awareness Month by becoming more aware of children’s health issues and evidence-based strategies to prevent them. These issues are preventable by educating and instilling healthy habits at an early age.

This unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic has shifted the way children are interacting with their peers, participating in activities, and receiving education. The school health non-profit organization, Action for Healthy Kids, recommends for kids to stay connected with their pediatrician, stay active, and eat healthy. These actions have proven to fight against health disparities, strengthen the child’s immune system, and mental well-being.

Most Texas schools are conducting distance learning, so staying active will help children to learn better and reduce their stress levels. “Physical activity and play are still important parts of the curriculum”, says, Erica Reyes, Extension Program Specialist with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. Reyes continues, “engagement needs to include lessons about getting up from the computer screen and doing brain breaks that are action based”.

Parents also play a vital role in maintaining a healthy lifestyle for their child. At home, parents are encouraged to implement sitting less and moving more along with discussing the benefits of healthy eating.

Physical activity and healthy eating can be combined during virtual learning to provide education, movement, and fun! Studies show that incorporating movement into learning can assist a child in gaining and retaining knowledge. Action for Healthy Kids reports, “taking an unstructured approach and allowing children to move while they learn is a great way to get the brain stimulated and promote exercise – it also allows for a deeper dive into the mind-body connection”.

While any activity has benefits, Reyes promotes simple and accessible movement. She adds, “Walking is one of the easiest and least expensive ways to stay healthy”.

Another way to help form a sustained habit of walking/activity is by participating in any local Extension Walk Across Texas (WAT) programs. Walk Across Texas! is a FREE, 8-week program designed to help Texans establish the habit of regular physical activity. A new online feature Walk Through Texas History is a four-week program designed to help Texans establish the habit of regular physical activity while learning the rich history of Texas.

For more information please contact your Healthy South Texas Specialist.

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