

Simple ways to help kids eat healthy

Childhood obesity is a problem in many parts of the world, including the United States and Canada. The 2015-2016 National Health and Nutritional Evaluation Survey from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that the national childhood obesity rate among 2- to 19-year-olds was 18.5 percent. Just north of the United States, the Public Health Agency of Canada reports that, in 2017, 30 percent of Canadian children between the ages of five and 17 were overweight or obese. Healthy lifestyles can help children achieve and maintain healthy weights into adulthood. Nutritious diets are an essential component of healthy lifestyles, and the American Academy of Pediatrics offers the following tips to parents who want to help their kids eat healthier.

- Serve low-fat or no-fat milk, yogurt and cheese. Low-fat dairy products are low in calories, saturated fat and cholesterol

but still provide high amounts of protein, calcium and various vitamins and minerals. - Serve starches in small batches. The AAP notes that starchy foods, such as potatoes, pasta and rice,



help the body use fat and cholesterol. Small amounts of such foods can be beneficial additions to kids' diets. When serving such foods, avoid toppings such as butter, sour cream and gravy, which tend to be high in calories. Foods like cottage cheese, low-fat yo-

gurt and parmesan cheese are low-calorie alternatives to more traditional toppings.

- Choose lean meats as entrees. When choosing entrees, parents should opt for lean meats, such

as white meat chicken or turkey. Lean cuts of beef, pork or fish also can be included in healthy diets. When preparing chicken, remove the skin and cut away fat, which also can be removed from pork.

- Serve vegetable- or broth-based soups. Vegeta-

bles tend to be lower in calories and saturated fat than cream-based alternatives. When serving soups, particularly store-bought canned soups, parents should read labels and be mindful of the sodium content. Some canned soups include as much as two-thirds the daily recommended sodium intake in a single can. Large amounts of sodium can lead to high blood pressure and heart disease, and the CDC notes that roughly 90 percent of children in the United States eat too much sodium each day.

- Bake, broil or grill foods. When preparing meals, parents can bake, broil or grill foods instead of frying them. Fried foods have been linked to a host of ailments, including type 2 diabetes and heart disease. In addition, when foods are fried in oil, they lose water and absorb fat, increasing their overall calorie count.

Understanding invasive species

Prohibited species Wisconsin Statute Section 23.22 (1) (c) officially defines invasive species as "nonindigenous species whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health."

Humans move organisms around all the time. Sometimes when we bring a non-native species into a new area the species will take over and spread rapidly and widely throughout the area. When this happens, the spread can cause major harm to the native ecosystem or humans. When non-native plants, animals, or pathogens rapidly takes over a new location and alter the ecosystem, we

consider them invasive species. How they become a problem

One of the reasons that invasive species are able to succeed is that they often leave their predators and competitors behind in their native ecosystems. Without these natural checks and balances they are able to reproduce rapidly and out-compete native species.

Invasive species can alter ecological relationships among native species and can affect ecosystem function, economic value of ecosystems, and human health. You can learn more about the impacts of invasive species on our why should we care page.

Humans have created conditions where plants and animals can aggressively invade and dominate natural areas and water bodies in three ways:

introducing exotic species (from other regions or countries) who lack natural competitors and predators to keep them in check;

disrupting the delicate balance of native ecosystems by changing environmental conditions -- e.g., stream sedimentation, ditching, building roads) or by restricting or eliminating natural processes (fire for example); in such instances, even some native plants and animals can become invasive; and spreading invasive species through vari-

ous methods. Some examples: moving watercrafts from waterbody to waterbody without removing invasive plants and animals; carrying seeds of invasive plants on footwear or pet's fur; mowing along roadsides; importing firewood and leaving in campgrounds; driving and biking with invasive seeds in tire treads.

The net result is a loss of diversity of our native plants and animals as invasive species rapidly multiply and take over. About 42 percent of the species on the federal Threatened or Endangered species lists are at risk primarily because of invasive species.

Help prevent wildfire caused by people

Over 98% of all wildfires in Wisconsin are caused by people. Knowing the common fire causes, understanding the conditions under which fires can occur and taking appropriate action can greatly increase your chances of preventing an unwanted fire.

Wildfires pose a serious threat to public safety, property and our natural resources. Anytime fire is used in the outdoors increases the potential for a wildfire to start and spread. This is especially concerning when fires occur near wooded or grassy areas.

Wildfire starts are directly related to fire danger. Spring is Wisconsin's peak time for wildfire occurrence due to elevated fire risk resulting from warmer temperatures, lower relative humidity, stronger winds and an abundance of dead vegetation accu-

lated over the winter months.

Responsible debris burning to prevent wildfire

Debris burning is the number one cause of wildfires in Wisconsin. The first step to prevent a debris-burning caused wildfire is to always con-



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sider alternatives to burning. If burning is your preferred option, then learning what to do before, during and after your burn will significantly decrease your chances of starting a wildfire.

Most debris fires occur in the spring after the snow-cover melts and prior to

vegetation greening. Spring is when people are outside doing yard clean-up and then choosing to burn leaves, brush and pine needles."