

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

September 19, 2016

**Contact: Rebecca Burns, Health Officer
517-279-9561, ext. 0148#**

**Theresa Christner, Health Ed./Prom. Director
517-279-9561, ext. 0144#**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month

Sturgis, MI. More than one in three high school students that live in Branch, Hillsdale and St. Joseph Counties are overweight or obese, according to the 2015-16 Michigan Profile for Healthy Youth Survey (MiPhy) findings. Childhood obesity puts kids at risk for health problems that were previously seen only in adults, like type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease. The good news is that childhood obesity can be prevented. In honor of National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month, the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency encourages parents to follow these recommendations for a healthy lifestyle that will benefit their children throughout their lives.

1. Help Kids Develop Healthy Eating Habits and Learn to Balance Calories.

One part of balancing calories is to eat foods that provide adequate nutrition and an appropriate number of calories. To help children and families develop healthy eating habits:

- Provide plenty of vegetables, fruits, and whole-grain products.
- Include low-fat or non-fat milk or dairy products.
- Choose lean meats, poultry, fish, lentils, and beans for protein.
- Serve reasonably-sized portions.
- Encourage your family to drink lots of water.
- Limit sugar-sweetened beverages.
- Limit consumption of sugar and saturated fat.

Remember small steps every day can lead to a recipe for success!

2. Remove calorie-rich temptations!

Although everything can be enjoyed in moderation, reducing the calorie-rich temptations of high-fat and high-sugar, or salty snacks can also help your children develop healthy eating habits. Instead only allow your children to eat them sometimes, so that they truly will be treats! Here are examples of easy-to-prepare, low-fat and low-sugar treats that are 100 calories or less:

- A medium-size apple
- A medium-size banana
- 1 cup blueberries
- 1 cup grapes
- 1 cup carrots, broccoli, or bell peppers with 2 tbsp. hummus

3. Help Kids Stay Active

Another part of balancing calories is to engage in an appropriate amount of physical activity. In addition to being fun for children and teens, regular physical activity has many health benefits, including:

- Strengthening bones
- Decreasing blood pressure
- Reducing stress and anxiety
- Increasing self-esteem
- Helping with weight management

Children and teens should participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity most days of the week, preferably daily. Remember that children imitate adults. Start adding physical activity to your own daily routine and encourage your child to join you. Some examples of moderate intensity physical activity include:

- Brisk walking
- Playing tag
- Jumping rope

- Playing soccer
- Swimming
- Dancing

4. Help Kids Limit Sedentary Time.

In addition to encouraging physical activity, help children avoid too much sedentary time. Although quiet time for reading and homework is fine, limit the time your children watch television, play video games, or surf the web to no more than 2 hours per day. Additionally, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) does not recommend television viewing for children age 2 or younger. Instead, encourage your children to find fun activities to do with family members or on their own that simply involve more activity.

Taking small steps as a family can help your child stay at a healthy weight.

For more information about how you can get your family on the path to good health, check out the health department's website at www.bhsj.org. Like us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/bhsjwic> and receive regular postings that include health recipes and ideas that will inspire you to take the next step towards a healthier future!

Branch County
570 N. Marshall Rd.
Coldwater, MI 49036
(517) 279-9561,
ext. 0144#

Hillsdale County
20 Care Drive
Hillsdale, MI 49242
(517) 437-7395
ext. 0144#

Three Rivers
1110 Hill St.
Three Rivers, MI 49093
(269) 273-2161
ext. 0144#

#