ROLE OF WIC NUTRITION PROGRAM IN CHILDHOOD OBESITY PREVENTION

Lisa Richards, MS, RD, Nutrition Services Manager, State WIC Program, Division of Public Health Services, DHHS, lrichards@dhhs.state.nh.us

DECREASE IN CHILDHOOD OBESITY RATES

- Recent study from CDC showed that after decades of rising rates, obesity among low-income preschoolers declined slightly in NH, along with 18 other states from 2008-2011. Nationally, policies and efforts to promote physical activity and healthy eating such as Baby Friendly hospitals and support for childcare providers to improve nutrition, increase physical activity, and decrease computer and television time for young children are effective. http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6231a4.htm?s_cid=mm6231a4_w
- Data is from the Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance System (PedNSS) which collects data on preschool children (birth to age 5 years old) enrolled in the NH WIC Program. Heights and weights of approximately 8,500 NH children (2-5 years old) per year showed a decrease in obesity from 15.5% in 2007 to 14.6% in 2011. Obesity defined as BMI greater than or equal to the 95th%. Highest rates among Hispanic children and older children.
- Good CDC website for more information http://www.cdc.gov/VitalSigns/ChildhoodObesity/
- DHHS website for PedNSS and PNNS data http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/dphs/nhp/wic/surveillance-reports.htm

BREASTFEEDING PROMOTION

- Breastfeeding rates continue to rise according to CDC’s Breastfeeding Report Card. For NH, percentage of babies being breastfed at six months of age increased from 34% in 2000 to 54% in 2010. Percentage of babies being breastfed at 12 months increased from 19% to 26% from 2000-2010. Percentage of babies who started breastfeeding increased from 81% in 2000 to 86% in 2010. http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/data/reportcard.htm
- NH WIC data from PedNSS shows ever breastfeeding at 72% in 2011 compared to 51% in 2000, 6 months breastfeeding at 22% in 2011 compared to 18% in 2000. Efforts focus on breastfeeding peer counselors, availability of free breast pumps, and certified lactation counselors in all WIC clinics.
- “This is great news for the health of New Hampshire because babies who are breastfed have lower risks of ear and gastrointestinal infections, diabetes, and obesity, and mothers who breastfeed have lower risks of breast and ovarian cancers,” said DPHS Director, José Montero, Director of Public Health at the NH DHHS. “Breastfeeding lowers health care costs and it gives babies the healthiest start in life nutritionally. It is important that we continue working to improve hospital, community and workplace support for breastfeeding mothers and babies and realize these cost savings and health benefits.”
- Hospitals are important for supporting breastfeeding mothers and babies. Percentage of hospitals implementing maternity practices to keep mothers and babies together after birth has increased. In NH, the percentage of births occurring at Baby Friendly Facilities has increased from 16% in 2007 to 27% in 2011. Four baby friendly hospitals in NH (Concord, Mary Hitchcock, Alice Peck Day, and St Joseph)
- For more information about New Hampshire’s efforts to support breastfeeding, visit www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/nhp/wic/breastfeeding.htm

WIC FOOD PACKAGE CHANGES

- October 2009 national changes made to the WIC food package. Decreased foods high in fat and cholesterol and calories (milk, eggs, cheese, juice) and addition of higher nutrient value foods (fruits and vegetables, whole grain breads and cereals). Additional foods added for exclusively breastfeeding moms and babies, in an effort to incentivize longer breastfeeding duration.
- Offers more variety and more food choices for WIC families, while keeping with nutrition education messages of breastfeeding, low fat milk, more fruits and vegetables, less juice, and more whole grains.
CHRONIC DISEASE PROGRAM INITIATIVES  (contact Regina Flynn at rflynn@dhhs.state.nh.us)

- Obesity Prevention Program worked with the NH Breastfeeding Task Force to recognize employers that support breastfeeding requirements of the ACA Break Time for Nursing Mothers. Awards were given out in June of this year to 3 employers who are now Baby Friendly Worksites (Plymouth State University, Stonyfield Yogurt, and Elliot Hospital).
- OPP-WIC-MCH Coordinator partnered on a grant to Keene State College to develop on-line breastfeeding training for child care providers, including storage of breast milk to supporting breastfeeding moms.
- For 4 years OPP worked on increasing health policies and practices in childcare programs, including implementing the Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment in Child Care (NAP SACC). To date, 46 child care programs have used the self-assessment to improve nutrition and physical activity policies and practices. OPP physical activity specialist provides training at child care conferences on benefits of physical activity and programs available (I am Moving I am Learning, NAP SACC, and Let’s Move in Child Care).
- OPP continues to work on improvements in nutrition policies, including sodium and physical activity policies in child care programs.
- OPP will be providing technical assistance and trainings to schools to improve daily physical activity, improve Physical Education and to increase or bring back recess, and on implementation of the NH School Nutrition Standards and the promotion of the USDA Healthier US Schools initiative.