

High Blood Pressure in Children as Young as Three (3) Years of Age

WE CAN TAKE CARE OF OUR HEALTH IV

By Mrs. Marva Moore

One of the primary 2013 goals for the Community Wellness Coalition is addressing obesity. This is one of the major health issues facing Americans. On June 29, 2013, we were presented with an opportunity to share information to the 30 students attending Summer Station at the Original Walker Grant. We felt we could not pass up this opportunity. We solicited the help of fellow coalition members Mrs. Jane Hargraves, Mrs. Marva Moore and Mrs. Tracie Roseboro.

Mrs. Roseboro provided pamphlets that focused on “heart health” and nutrition. As we reviewed the material, one pamphlet in particular caught my eye. “High Blood Pressure and Children: What Parents Need to Know.” A second booklet “The Fourth Report on the Diagnosis, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure in Children and Adolescents,” published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, takes in-depth look at this subject.

If your child currently has his or her blood pressure checked as part of his or her regular doctor visit, that is great news. Yes, it should be done on a regular basis because changes happen quickly in the body with no symptoms. The only way to know if your child is hypertensive, or has high blood pressure, is to have it checked. The normal range for blood pressure in children is usually lower than in adults. Three high blood pressure readings during health care visits may require your child to get additional tests.

As with adults, high pressure can cause kidney disease, heart disease, eye disease, and other serious health problems over time. The longer the high blood pressure goes uncontrolled, the more harm it will cause. High blood pressure may be treated by making life style changes including diet changes, more physical activity, and weight loss. It may be necessary for some children to take blood pressure medicines, but it does not have to reach that point.

Below are a few suggestions to keep your child’s blood pressure in the healthy range:

- Give your child healthy home-cooked food – the fewer processed and fast foods the better. Processed food, fast food and some restaurant food contain large amounts of unhealthy fat, sugar, and sodium to enhance the flavor.
- Use less canned or pre-prepared food (high sodium content.) If feasible, rinse canned foods under running water for a few minutes to get rid of the excess sodium that has been used to preserve the food.
- Physical activity is key to maintaining a healthy body and blood pressure.
- If your older children smoke, discuss with your doctor ways to help them quit.
- If blood pressure medicine has been prescribed, help your child by making sure that it is taken consistently and in the correct dosage.
- It is helpful to the child for you to become his or her partner in keeping a healthy weight.

What is a healthy diet?

- Less salt and packaged foods that are high in sodium and fats, and more vegetables and fruits.

During Session I on July 18, 2013, thirty students attending “Summer Station” (held at the Original Walker Grant) were introduced by members of the Community Wellness Coalition to reading and understanding

nutrition labels for two ingredients: sugar and sodium. The last session on July 26, 2013, focused on healthy snacks. Each student received a “Blessing Serving” of homemade zucchini bread, raw vegetables (broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, and celery with “The Original Ranch Dressing” (low sodium) as a dip. Among the fruits served were grapes, strawberries, kiwi, and apples slices. They also sampled an “Asian Rice Cracker” mixture. After the food tasting, students received a treat of pretzels covered in healthy dark chocolate, strawberries covered in dark chocolate, and one Hershey Kiss made from dark chocolate.

Our goal is to have these students be the voice for the change that has to happen. This is a concerted effort to preserve the health of our future generations. The students were asked to share what they learned with their families, friends, and school mates.

The Community Wellness Coalition thanks Mr. Hamm and Mrs. Lateefah Muhammad for this opportunity to participate in Summer Station.

Below is a picture of students anxiously awaiting their “Blessing Serving” from Mrs. Roseboro.

