



NEW HAMPSHIRE

Fit WIC Initiative

As health and nutrition professionals nationwide are aware, overweight and obesity are increasing at an alarming rate. It is especially troubling when weight problems are seen among young children. The New Hampshire WIC Program has developed a positive new initiative, called Fit WIC, to address this health problem.

The necessity for this program can be seen in the following 2006 statistics:

- 18.1% of NH WIC participants two years of age and older are at risk of overweight and 15.9% are overweight.
- In our Latino population, this is even more troubling with 12.1% of children two years and older at risk of overweight and 19.7% overweight.
- This translates to about one of every three NH WIC children two years of age and older being either at risk of overweight or overweight.

In the last 20 years, the number of overweight children in the New Hampshire WIC Program has shown a steady increase. In 1986, the rate of overweight was 7.2%; the rate doubled to 15.9% in 2006. This is consistent with what is seen across the nation, with one in five children in the US now considered overweight.

◆ What is Fit WIC?

Fit WIC is a program to increase the physical activity of preschoolers every day, by providing age-appropriate physical play ideas and activi-

ties. It does this by providing parents with ideas and tools to empower them to succeed in this endeavor. Children need daily opportunities for free, unstructured play, as well as time for structured, skill building play, like throwing and catching. Fit WIC promotes the parent as their child's most important teacher. To support parents' efforts, WIC staff will be conducting group education activities for 3- to 4-year-old children and their parents. The Fit WIC Parent's Activity book and kit will be given out at that time. The book and kit provide easy, age-appropriate activities to increase a preschooler's play and develop their physical skills. The activity book also offers solutions to common barriers to physical play as identified by parents. Fit WIC offers WIC staff and parents a positive approach to prevent childhood overweight, and sets the stage for healthy habits that can lead to a lifetime of healthy living.

◆ Where is Fit WIC happening in New Hampshire?

Five NH WIC agencies are piloting the Fit WIC intervention:

- Community Action Program Belknap-Merrimack Counties WIC Program
- Coos County Family Health Services WIC Program
- Ammonoosuc Community Health Services WIC Program
- Rockingham Community Action WIC Program

- Southern NH Services WIC Program

The project, which began in the spring of 2006, gives the Fit WIC Parent's Activity book and kit to all eligible families with 3- to 4-year-old children participating in WIC, regardless of their weight status. The goal is to reach 6,000 children. In 2008, a culturally appropriate Hispanic version of Fit WIC will be available for the Latino population.

- ◆ **How can health professionals support Fit WIC?**

There are many health programs and agencies that provide services to children who are participating in Fit WIC. Your local WIC agency may be contacting you about Fit WIC to review this program and the messages being conveyed. Please help support WIC's efforts and talk with WIC families about the importance of physical activity for their preschool children, and support the message of *Play Every Day!*

From a Fit WIC Parent:

"I enjoy the Fit WIC program. It gave me a lot more ideas for activities. It completely changed my daughter's TV viewing and created more active and building activities for her. It also gave me more push to include myself in her activities. Thank you."

If you are interested in receiving copies of the Fit WIC materials or learning more about the NH Fit WIC project, please contact Frances McLaughlin or Valerie Long at the NH Department of Health and Human Services' WIC Program at 603-271-4546.



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