

Ottawa West EMC

Parents urged to 'know more-do more' with family health, nutrition

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EMC News - Parents everywhere want to believe that their children are doing everything right, eating a balanced diet, getting enough exercise, and spending enough time on homework. But a recently released study shows some parents have been looking through the proverbial rose-coloured glasses, assessing their children's health and weight far differently than the experts.

Last Saturday, Ottawa Public Health, along with the Champaign Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Network, launched "Know more, Do more," a campaign aimed to increase fitness and healthy nutrition by starting with how much parents know.

According to the statistics, when parents were surveyed about their child's health, only 7% identified their child as overweight, while only 0.2% said their child was obese. Yet data from the Canadian Health Measures survey noted that 26% of children aged 6-11 years in Canada are overweight and obese, and that number rises to 28% when children enter their teen years.

"In essence, parents are overestimating their children's healthy eating and activity levels, and underestimating their children's weight levels," explained Dr. Mark Tremblay, director of the healthy active living and obesity research group at CHEO.

Dr. Vera Etches represented Ottawa Public Health at the event launch, which took place at the Dovercourt Recreation Centre. She said she is looking forward to seeing how the campaign rolls out across Eastern Ontario. A similar launch took place in Petawawa and Rockland last weekend as well.

"We're excited about this campaign and it's possibilities," she said. "We know that one of the things parents care about most is the health of their children."

To participate in the campaign, families can register their names online, and commit to changing their eating patterns while adding extra physical activity. When registered, families have access to a virtual tip-jar, filled with suggestions to help parents and their children break out of the usual routine.



In Westboro, popular blogger, mom and community builder Andrea Tompkins has signed on to try out the suggestions with her family. Along with her husband and two daughters, Ms. Tompkins said she would be following the advice of the tip jar, and tracking their progress honestly through her blog.

She said health is an important issue to rally behind, but added it can be overwhelming to think about all at once. However, she said, it's a challenge she's ready to meet.

"I'm inspired now to take control," Ms. Tompkins said. "This is a call to action."

She added that she looks forward to helping her children understand health and fitness needs through her capacity as a positive role model.

"I think it's really important, and I do believe it's really important that it starts at home, it starts with mom and dad," she said.

One idea she will be trying out, and already has, includes having a dance party with her daughters when it's time to make dinner. She said there would be some challenges, though, habits that may be hard to break.

"It is very easy when the weather is bad...to just hunker down and play the wii," she said.

For more information about the campaign, or to register, visit www.knowmore-domore.ca. To follow Ms. Tompkins' adventures, visit her blog at www.quietfish.com/notebook.

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<http://www.emcottawawest.ca/20100402/News/Parents+urged+to+%27know+more-do+more%27+with+family+health%2C+nutrition>