

2017

# My First Cookbook! Healthy Recipes that Kids Can Make

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## Recommended Citation

KINN, Emily, "My First Cookbook! Healthy Recipes that Kids Can Make" (2017). *Family Medicine Block Clerkship, Student Projects*. 284.

<https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/fmclerk/284>

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# My First Cookbook!

Healthy Recipes that Kids Can Make!

Stowe Family Practice  
July Rotation (Rotation 3)  
Class of 2019  
Project Mentor- Dr. Katie Marvin

# Childhood Obesity-a Complex Public Health Problem

- ▶ Childhood obesity is a serious medical condition that affects about 17.5% of 6-11 year olds and 20.5% of 12-19 year olds nationally (CDC, Overweight & Obesity). A BMI greater than the 95th percentile for age is considered obese.
- ▶ This public health concern has skyrocketed in the past few decades. The CDC reports that the percentage of children that are obese has tripled since 1970.
- ▶ On a more local level, in the state of Vermont, 13.7% of 2-4 year old WIC participants and 13.2% of adolescents are obese (CDC, Vermont State Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Profile). In Lamoille County, these numbers are comparable (McCormack, 2010).
- ▶ Making healthy eating choices and living a healthy lifestyle is a complex process! There are many facets that go into childhood obesity including eating high-calorie/low-nutrient foods, consumption of sugary beverages (soda, sports drinks and juice), too much screen time, limited physical activity and not enough time for families to prepare home-cooked meals.

# The Cost and Implications of Childhood Obesity

- ▶ Childhood obesity has a huge impact on a child's health! Children who are obese have a higher likelihood of having problems with risk factors for heart disease, high blood pressure, asthma, sleep apnea, psychiatric problems and self esteem.
- ▶ Children who are obese have a much higher likelihood of becoming an obese adult as well.
- ▶ There are also huge financial implications. It is estimated that the direct cost of childhood obesity is about \$14.1 billion annually (Cawley J., 2010).
- ▶ Another important consideration is that about half of obese children will go on to become obese adults, which also has economic impacts. It is estimated that obesity in adulthood adds up to about \$147 billion annually in healthcare costs. This progression from childhood to adulthood obesity is estimated to be responsible for 27% of the healthcare spending increase from 1998 to 2001 (Cawley J., 2010).

# Community Perspective

- ▶ **Katie Myerson (Registered dietitian/nutritionist and certified diabetes educator on the Community Health Team at Stowe Family Practice)**
  - Works with children and their families on healthy eating habits
  - Often suggests to kids and families to adopt a mentality of incorporating more healthy foods into your diet rather than limiting food intake to achieve a healthy weight
  - It is also important to practice “mindful eating,” paying close attention to your emotional state and level of hunger when you are eating. For example, take small pauses when you are eating to check-in with yourself to see if you are still hungry. It is easier to practice mindful eating when you are not eating in front of the TV!
  - Also stresses to her clients the importance of families preparing their own meals rather than buying pre-made meals or going out to eat.
- ▶ **Catherine Mclsaac (Registered dietitian at the University of Vermont Medical Center)**
  - Also stresses the importance of children learning cooking skills early on. These skills will serve kids well when they are adults too!
  - Nutritious eating can be done with busy schedules and while on a budget with some practice and creativity. Try to buy fruits/ vegetables that are in season or use frozen options.
  - Getting outside to play can be tricky- especially in Vermont in the wintertime, when it gets dark out early. Although it may seem counterintuitive, try getting outside to play for a bit before doing homework, so that it is still light out!
- ▶ **Julie Pickett (Children’s librarian at the Stowe Free Public Library)**
  - There are cookbooks for kids available in the library. One section is aimed at teenagers and another at younger kids. There are currently no cookbooks geared toward the Mediterranean diet style cooking.
  - There also is a event meeting room in the library that can be rented for free. There currently are activities scheduled here for children, but none regarding nutrition education or cooking skills. It would be a possibility to host education sessions here aimed at kids or parents regarding nutrition.

# Intervention and Methodology

- ▶ Intervention- Created a cookbook targeted at elementary school aged children. Contains recipes that kids can prepare themselves with minimal parental supervision. The goal is to get kids in the practice of making healthy food choices and also to gain skills in basic food preparation.
- ▶ The concepts in the cookbook are largely based in the Mediterranean Diet. This diet has been widely studied and has been indicated to have many health benefits including reducing the risk of heart disease and decreasing the incidence of certain cancers and neurodegenerative diseases (Sofi et al., 2010). It is characterized by high consumption of vegetables and fruits, whole grains, and replacing red meats with fish and poultry. It also limits saturated fats (such as from butter) and focuses on “healthy fats,” such as those found in fish, nuts and olive oil. It also limits salt intake.
- ▶ The main themes of the cookbook include-
  - 1.) Recipe creation guided by recommendations from the Mediterranean diet
  - 2.) Safety concerns with cooking (especially with using heat and cutting up fruits and veggies)
  - 3.) Limiting saturated fats and sugar
  - 4.) Most importantly, getting kids in the habit of being involved in their own meal prep and experimenting with new combinations of food in a fun and tasty way!

# Results

- ▶ Created a cookbook with a variety of recipes for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Each page presented an idea for each meal and the pages were cut into panels, so that kids can mix and match the meals with different pages to create new menus.
- ▶ Focused on meals that included vegetables, fruits, whole grains, nuts, low-fat dairy, fish and poultry as main ingredients.
- ▶ Each recipe focused on simple steps that a kid could do themselves. But it also included directions for when it is appropriate for a grownup to help (such as with cutting and any parts involving heating food).
- ▶ Also included other healthy tips for eating from various sources. The goal was to get kids to start thinking about making healthy choices with food.

# Evaluation of Effectiveness and Limitations of Project

- ▶ I would love to use the Stowe Public Library as a resource for evaluating effectiveness of the cookbook. It would be great to use their meeting room space to host a cooking or nutrition class at the library and to see which recipes the kid's liked the best.
- ▶ I would also love to get parents' input as well for effectiveness- I would love to give a short survey for how manageable it would be to buy the ingredients listed (in terms of cost and availability)
- ▶ One limitation for this project is that it is up to the parents to buy the healthy ingredients for these recipes. Hopefully, getting kids excited about cooking may help with getting the whole family involved in making nutritious eating into a daily habit and spending more time in the kitchen together!



# Further Directions

- ▶ I plan to continue with this project in the near future to make some additions to the cookbook. I would like to expand the recipes to include some options for healthy snack ideas, healthier drink options to replace sugary drinks (like soda, sports drinks and juice) and dessert options. I also would like to add some more vegetarian options.
- ▶ I also would love to incorporate more ideas for menus that match the foods available in different seasons.
- ▶ I would also love to consult local elementary schools to see what is in their curriculum regarding nutrition. It would be helpful to reinforce these concepts in the cookbook.
- ▶ I would love to add more “how-to” instructions about using different utensils in the kitchen (measuring cups, teaspoons/tablespoons, whisks etc.) so that the kids can start building foundational skills for cooking and following recipes in the future.
- ▶ Lastly, I would like to personally cook all of the recipes in the book and take my own photographs to be presented next to the recipe as a guide. I also want to add some more of my own illustrations!

# References

- ▶ 2017 Overweight and Obesity. Centers for Disease Control. 08/10/2017. <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/childhood/index.html>
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