Workshop 1:

*UW-Extension to address nutrition in child care programs.*

“Mommy I don’t like squash. Will you make me macaroni and cheese?”

Getting young children to eat healthy foods can seem like a real struggle, and often it seems easier to just give them what they want. But nutrition experts warn that food preferences start early and can become lifelong habits.

“Obesity has increased so much in the last two decades that the Centers for Disease Control now calls it an epidemic,” according to Dr. Susan Nitzke, emeritus professor nutritional sciences at UW-Madison. “And being overweight as a young child can predict a lifetime of obesity, including an increased risk of many diseases, including diabetes, asthma, and high blood pressure.

To help child care professionals address this issue, the local office of UW-Extension will present a series of workshops on mealtimes and nutrition. The first 2-hour workshop will be held <DATE>, and covers how children learn to love or dislike nutritious foods, and how they learn to enjoy mealtimes or make them into power struggles. “Child care staff will learn strategies for getting children to try new foods and to make mealtimes pleasant for everyone,” says < NAME>, Extension Family Living Agent for XXX County.

A program on this topic just for staff of early care and education programs is new. “We’ve always had educational programs on nutrition for families,” explains <FLA Name>, And any parent wanting to learn more should contact our office.” But with about 75% of Wisconsin’s preschool-aged (2-6) children in child care, <FLA NAME> reports that these programs have become a big influence on children’s attitudes toward mealtimes and foods. “In the same way that young children learn early lessons about letters and numbers and sharing, they also learn early lessons about mealtimes and nutrition,” according to Dr. Dave Riley, a child psychologist at UW-Madison, and co-author of the workshop series.

Information on the workshop and other nutrition resources is available from the county Extension office at <TELE NUMBER> or <WEB URL>.

321 words.

Lead = 12 words.

Wkshp 2

*Healthy foods in child care: Topic of UW-Extension training*

That snack food might say “natural” and “healthy” on the label, but is it really? An upcoming workshop for local child care staff will cover this and related subjects.

The workshop is designed for child care staff because these programs provide a significant amount of the nutrition for many children today. As with their letters and numbers, children’s early learning about nutrition and mealtimes can have an impact for many years to come, according to Prof. Dave Riley of UW-Madison, who helped develop the workshop. “Early nutrition is important not just for young children’s health, but for their health across their whole lifespan.”

“One of the keys to good nutrition is to increase whole grains and reduce added sugars,” according to <NAME>, Family Living Agent in the XX County Extension Office. In the workshop, participants will look at ingredient labels from real snack foods for children, learning how to identify when a food is high or low in whole grains, fats, and sugars. The workshop also covers ways to change common recipes to make them healthier.

This workshop is the second in a series. “Early education staff at the first workshop really enjoyed it comparing notes on what their programs are doing at mealtimes,” according to Ms. <NAME of FLA>. The 2-hour workshop is scheduled for <DATE>. Information on the workshop and other nutrition resources is available from the county Extension office at <TELE NUMBER> or <WEB URL>.

240 words.

Lead = 29 words.

Workshop 3

*Extension offers training for child care programs*

If one child in a child care program has a peanut allergy, should peanuts be forbidden in the whole program? Or what if a family has a religious taboo against some foods?

Such questions come up every year in early care and education programs, and many more like them. Should the program allow parents to send candy to school with the child’s lunch? If the family insists that children eat all the food they serve themselves, should the program do the same?

For basic health and safety, child care programs need policies on issues like these, according to <NAME>, Family Living Agent for XXX County Extension. “A written policy prevents a lot of problems, and can help a program run a lot smoother and train its staff easier. But parents have to view the policy as legitimate and sensible. At its best, an early care and education program is a small community, and the policy for nutrition and mealtimes helps establish some of the expectations and values of that community.”

A 2-hour training on “Creating a food and nutrition policy for your early care and education program” will be presented by the XXX County Extension office on DATE. The workshop is free and qualifies child care staff for continuing education (Registry) credits. For more information, contact the county Extension office at <TELE NUMBER> or <WEB URL>.

226 words.

Lead = 32 words.

Wkshp 4

*Child care programs use mealtimes to teach pre-reading and math*

One of the easiest ways to predict a young child’s language ability, and pre-reading ability, is to observe the mealtime conversations of that child’s family.

“Families that have regular mealtimes, and share more around the meal table, have children with larger vocabularies who use more complex sentences,” according to Prof. Dave Riley of UW-Madison. He explains that “this is true, actually, of conversations held anytime during the day, but mealtime conversations are especially good predictors of pre-reading abilities in preschoolers. We think this is because mealtimes are an everyday event that becomes a routine, which makes them perfect for learning.”

The same is true for learning other topics too. Children learn to share, to take turns, and to control their impulsiveness (waiting until everyone is served before eating) around the meal table. “You’d be surprised how much mathematics children learn at the meal table,” says <NAME>, Family Living Agent for XXX County Extension. “When a two-year-old helps you by setting the table, this is where they really begin to understand the regularities of numbers, that the number of plates is the same as the number of people, that the number of cups will equal the number of plates, that you can subtract one if one person is missing.”

A workshop on how to use mealtimes to teach these kinds of lessons is being offered to the staff of local child care programs by <NAME> of XXX County Extension on <DATE>. The workshop is free and qualifies child care staff for continuing education (Registry) credits. For more information, contact the county Extension office at <TELE NUMBER> or <WEB URL>.

268 words.

Lead = 26 words.