

# Your Health Matters

## GROWING HEALTHY CHILDREN

Have you seen the Montgomery County Health Department billboard on I-70? Our billboard message was “Grow Healthy”. The billboard was near High Hill. In the next week, we will be changing out our billboard message, But, I wanted to write an article on this topic: Growing Healthy Children.

The average class size in our public schools is around 20 children. According to national statistics, that means four children in every classroom struggle with childhood obesity. Children who have obesity are more likely to be bullied and face stigma. They are more likely to grow up to be adults with obesity. They are at risk of lifelong physical and mental health issues, like diabetes and certain cancers.

Childhood obesity is a major public health problem. September is National Childhood Obesity Month and seeks to share information to help parents and caregivers learn ways to promote healthy growth in children and prevent childhood obesity.

There are many factors that influence childhood obesity. Some children spend too much time in non-active pastimes like watching TV or playing video games. Some children don't get enough sleep. Some consume too many high-calorie snacks and drinks.

Parents and caregivers can help prevent childhood obesity and support healthy growth by ensuring that children have balanced energy.

- Establish a regular bedtime so children can get plenty of sleep.
- Limit time with digital devices, especially before bedtime.
- Provide opportunities for daily physical activity. Although they are great activities, kids don't have to go to the park or join team sports to be active. They can play a game of tag, jump rope, hop, skip, run – anything that gets them moving!
- Help children eat the right amount and the right type of healthy calories. Provide healthy fruits and fresh vegetables for snacks. Provide healthful, homemade meals with a healthy balance of proteins, carbohydrates, fats and oils.
- Encourage kids to drink water instead of sugary juices or soda.

Preventing childhood obesity and helping our kids grow up healthy starts at home, but it requires the support of our whole community. Working together, we can help make healthier food and drinks the easier choice for kids. We can encourage them to put digital devices down and get moving!

The Montgomery County Health Department loves taking care of your family, and works every day to protect, promote and improve health in our community. To learn more, call 573-564-2495 or visit us online at [www.montgomerycountyhealth.org](http://www.montgomerycountyhealth.org) or on Facebook or Twitter @healthymoco. ■

