

Eat Smart Move More is more than a slogan

Originally printed in the Durham Herald Sun on December 11, 2008.

After five years of trying every diet under the sun, Tasha, a Durham resident is off the “yo-yo”. At almost 45 pounds lighter, Tasha boasts that her success came from a change in lifestyle habits centered on physical activity and nutrition. She grew tired of feeling like a failure and discovered that learning and continually using weight management skills was the key to getting the weight off and keeping it off. Almost one year ago, Tasha participated in one of the first Eat Smart Move More Weigh Less series offered in Durham. She recalls that “Durham offered me a lifetime of success and I want to share it with others,” and she is doing just that.

Overweight and obesity are associated with multiple long-term, costly, and serious conditions including heart disease, cancer and diabetes. In North Carolina, more than 60% of adults are overweight or obese; however, in Durham that figure climbs to 65% overweight or obese adults. Childhood obesity is an even greater threat to long-term health and North Carolina is ranked as 5th in the nation for overweight adolescents. The holiday season and the beginning of a new year are the right times to change this.

You have probably heard the words Eat Smart Move More. It is a movement in North Carolina that aims to reach specific statewide obesity reduction goals by the year 2010. *Eat Smart, Move More NC* strives to reverse overweight and obesity by creating environments in which healthy eating and physical activity are the norm instead of the exception.

The choices we make about the foods and beverages that we consume play a major role in our health and weight. Eating well, however, must go hand-in-hand with getting or keeping the body moving. Fad diets may work temporarily, but are rarely successful in keeping the weight off. Portion control and a sensible diet that includes fruits and vegetables are critical. Unfortunately, only 45% of Durham County adults meet national recommendations for physical activity and only 27% of Durham County adults consume at least five fruits and vegetables daily.

In Durham, learning how to adopt healthier lifestyle behaviors is easier than most people think. There are numerous opportunities that are offered regularly, many of which are available to the public free of charge. Many of these are discussed below and in the Clip and Save.

Given that the average adult gains 2-5 pounds over the holiday season, *Eat Smart Move More* has a campaign to prevent the holiday weight gain. Each year, around the beginning of November, North Carolina residents are invited to participate in a weight management challenge through the holiday season. Maintain Don't Gain runs from Thanksgiving week through the New Year holiday and aims to continually promote physical activity and nutrition choices to registered challengers to help with weight management.

Periodically, the Durham County Health Department and Cooperative Extension offer the Eat Smart Move More, Weigh Less program, a 15 week program that explores lifetime behaviors and strategies towards weight management. The two organizations also partner to offer Families Eating Smart, Moving More through four workshops that target healthy behaviors that families can adopt.

The same partners also offer the Chronic Disease Self-Management Workshop, a series of six sessions that help residents manage chronic diseases such as obesity, cancer and diabetes by working on healthier lifestyle choices like physical activity and nutrition.

In addition, some efforts are targeted towards African American faith-based groups. The P.E.A.C.E. (Physical Activity and Eating Healthy Activities in the Church Environment) Project offers physical activity and nutrition related programs and trainings for 12 African American churches in Durham. Even if your church does not participate in the P.E.A.C.E. Project, all African American churches can take advantage of information and training on developing and sustaining health ministries. This is available through the Durham County Health Ministry Network free of charge.

There are many programs and resources available to help area residents eat smart and move more. These are lifelong skills that will keep you and your family healthy for years to come.

Clip and Save

Programs and Resources-

- Maintain Don't Gain! Holiday Challenge. Sign up at: <http://www.myeatsmarmovenc.com/HolidayChallenge/index.html>
- Eat Smart Move More website: www.eatsmarmovenc.com
- Eating Smart Moving More brochure with nutrition tips and a map of places to be active in Durham County: www.healthydurham.org
- Eat Smart Move More Weigh Less, Families Eating Smart & Moving More, Chronic Disease Self Management Workshops and the Durham County Health Ministry Network; Durham County Health Department, Willa Robinson Allen, 560-7771
- Eat Smart Move More Weigh Less series: offered in January 2009 in partnership with Durham Parks & Recreation at Campus Hills. To register, contact Pam Jordan Carrington at 560-0536. The registration fee is \$15 for the 13 week series of classes.

Quick Facts about obesity -

- Financial costs for obesity are estimated at more than \$24.1 billion annually in medical care and lost productivity North Carolina. That means that every day, every man, woman and child across the state pays \$6.80 to cover the bill.
Source: www.beactivenc.org/mediacenter/Summary%20Report.pdf
- In Durham, only 27.5% of the population consumes at least 5 fruits and vegetables daily compared with 22.5% for North Carolina overall. The rates were lowest for those who did not attend college, minorities, males and people in households earning less than \$50,000 per year.

The Partnership for a Healthy Durham is the Healthy Carolinians planning team for Durham and serves as the Health Committee for the City and County's Results-Based Accountability initiative. The Obesity and Chronic Illness Committee is responsible for this series of articles. For more information on the Partnership, see www.healthydurham.org or call 560-7833.