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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT EATING HEALTHY - *IT WORKS!***

*Recent KidsPoll underscores the importance of regular family talks to improve your child's nutrition.*

**Milwaukee, WI, and Wilmington, DE, June 9, 2005** – Parents across the U.S. will agree that getting their kids to eat more fruits and vegetables can be a real challenge. So what works? A recent KidsHealth® KidsPoll asked kids, ages 9-13, to share their habits and attitudes about eating healthy. The survey showed that kids who talk with their families on a weekly or monthly basis about eating healthy consume more fruits and vegetables, drink more water, and have a greater intention to eat healthy foods. Talking to your kids about eating healthy does work:

- 73% of kids who said their family talks to them monthly about eating healthy, and 66% who said their family talks to them about eating healthy weekly, reported that they *try to eat healthy* “most” or “all the time.”
- 51% of kids who said their family talks to them weekly about eating healthy, and 43% who said their family talks to them about eating healthy monthly, reported that yesterday they ate *5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables*.
- Of the kids who spoke with their family weekly about eating healthy, the majority (30%) ranked “water” as their first choice for a beverage over soda, sports drinks, fruit juice, and milk.

In contrast:

- 35% of kids who said their family “never” talks to them about eating healthy reported that they *try to eat healthy* “once in a while,” or “never.”
- 62% of kids who said their family “never” talks to them about eating healthy reported that yesterday they ate *0-2 servings of fruits and vegetables*.
- Of the kids who reported that they “never” talk to their parents about eating healthy, the majority (34%) ranked “soda/pop or fruit flavor drink” as their first choice for a beverage.

*“Parents should take advantage of their child’s natural curiosity,” says Mary L. Gavin, MD, a pediatrician and medical editor for KidsHealth. “When your child asks questions such as ‘Why do I have to eat that?’ this is the perfect time to teach your child about making healthy food choices. Explain why that food is good for him or her and encourage your child to give it a try.”*

*“Parents should not give up after one or two attempts with a new food,” says Dr. Gavin. “Start a ‘just try it’ rule and stick to it at every meal. Kid’s palates, like their personalities, develop over time. It may take 10 or more tries before a child actually learns to like a new fruit or vegetable. Your child doesn’t need to finish everything on their plate, but they do need to try it – every time.”*

**Other findings:**

- Kids are more likely to skip breakfast as they become older: 12% of 9-year olds vs. 31% of 12-year olds “usually do not eat breakfast.”
- When asked, ‘Where do you get most of your information about eating healthy?’ kids ranked a family member highest (36%), school second (28%), and doctor or nurse third (19%).
- Last but not least, when asked “Most of the time, who chooses the foods you eat?” 58% reported that *they* do, with “Mom” close behind (31%).

The KidsHealth KidsPoll on Nutrition and Food Choices surveyed 959 children ages 9 to 13 across the U.S., at eight member sites of the National Association of Health Education Centers (NAHEC). The survey was conducted by researchers from the Department of Health Education and Recreation, Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Survey questions were drafted with the expertise of the KidsPoll Scientific Advisory Board and Nutrition Experts: **Lynda Bergsma, PhD**, Assistant Professor, The University of Arizona Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health, **Karen Weber Cullen, DrPH, RD, LD**, Associate Professor, Baylor College of Medicine, **Alberta Frost**, Director of Office of Analysis Nutrition & Evaluation, USDA Food & Nutrition Service, and **Jayne A. Fulkerson, PhD**, Associate Professor, University of Minnesota School of Nursing.

For more information on findings or to arrange an interview concerning the KidsHealth KidsPoll, contact Kira Ebert at (302) 651-4115 or [KidsPoll@KidsHealth.org](mailto:KidsPoll@KidsHealth.org). For complete survey findings and methodology or to view other 2005 KidsPolls, including *Tobacco* and *Health Literacy*, please visit [nahec.org/KidsPoll](http://nahec.org/KidsPoll).

For information for Parents, visit: **KidsPoll – Kids Speak Up About Healthy Eating**  
[http://www.kidshealth.org/breaking\\_news/kidspoll\\_healthy\\_eating.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/breaking_news/kidspoll_healthy_eating.html)

For information for Kids, visit: **KidsPoll – What Kids Say About: What They Eat**  
[http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/talk/kidssay/poll\\_healthy\\_eating.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/talk/kidssay/poll_healthy_eating.html)

### **About the KidsHealth® KidsPoll**

A project of the National Association of Health Education Centers (NAHEC), the Nemours Center for Children's Health Media (creators of KidsHealth.org), and Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Department of Health Education and Recreation (project researchers), the KidsHealth KidsPoll gives children a national platform to share their views on health-related issues that affect them. For more information about the KidsHealth KidsPoll, please visit [nahec.org/KidsPoll/](http://nahec.org/KidsPoll/).

### **About the National Association of Health Education Centers (NAHEC)**

NAHEC is the national association and network of nonprofit health education centers (HECs) and of other organizations that support children's health education and provide products and services to HECs. NAHEC member centers reached over 3 million children, teachers, and parents in 2004. HECs use life-size exhibits, advanced audio-visual technology, and specialized, interactive instructional techniques not generally found in conventional classrooms. The curriculum is designed to support school-mandated areas of study. With programs like "Whodunit? - A Forensic Science Camp", Hummers outfitted with removable organs, and playgrounds modeled after anatomy parts, you'll see why former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. C. Everett Koop proclaimed that health education centers "put pizzazz in prevention." For more information about NAHEC, please visit [nahec.org](http://nahec.org).

### **About KidsHealth®**

KidsHealth creates engaging online, print, and video media about a wide range of health and family issues. KidsHealth has a physician-directed, professional editorial staff – and is the largest resource of online children's health, behavioral, and developmental information written for three distinct audiences: parents, kids, and teens. In 2004, over 60 million families turned to KidsHealth.org for expert answers – making it the Web's most accessed site on children's health. Recent accolades include the **2005 Webby Award for Best Family/Parenting Website**, the **2004 Webby Award for Best Health Website**, the **2004 Parents' Choice Gold Award**, the **2004 Teachers' Choice Award for the Family**, and selection as one of the **50 Coolest Websites** by **TIME Magazine**. KidsHealth comes from Nemours, one of the largest nonprofit organizations devoted to children's health. For more information about KidsHealth, please visit [KidsHealth.org](http://KidsHealth.org).

### **About Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Department of Health Education & Recreation**

Researchers from Southern Illinois University Carbondale's Department of Health Education and Recreation conduct the KidsHealth KidsPoll. The research team for this project is led by Steve Brown and David A. Birch, faculty members in the Department of Health Education and Recreation. The department offers a bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree in health education and a bachelor's and master's degree in recreation. The health education program is recognized nationally as a leader in school health education and graduate-level teaching and research. Graduates of the program are in health education leadership positions across the country. The department includes 11 health education faculty members and six recreation faculty members. For more information about SIUC, please visit [www.siu.edu](http://www.siu.edu).