Dear parent or caregiver,

A few years ago, we began a journey to identify the key health concerns for children in our six-county region (Denton, Hood, Johnson, Parker, Tarrant and Wise counties). We are writing today to thank you for your participation in that effort.

The answers you provided in the survey helped identify seven key health issues affecting the children of our region: abuse, access to care, asthma, dental health, mental health, obesity and safety. So much has happened since that first survey, but it all started with you.

In response to the survey, we are working together with other community partners to address these health issues, using data from the survey to guide our work. Cook Children’s created The Center for Children’s Health to lay the groundwork to support the survey and the resulting initiatives.

With this newsletter, we’ll communicate with you on a regular basis to share key information about what we learned, as well as resources and activities to help you raise a healthier child. You can also visit our Web site, centerforchildrens.org, for more resources and information on what’s going on in your area. In this issue, we will focus on physical fitness and nutrition.

Sincerely,

Larry Tubb  
Executive Director  
The Center for Children’s Health

Jackie Meeks  
Director of Community Health Research  
The Center for Children’s Health

Our promise
Knowing that every child’s life is sacred, it is the promise of Cook Children’s to improve the health of every child in our region through the prevention and treatment of illness, disease and injury.

To subscribe to this newsletter electronically, please send an email to thecenter@cookchildrens.org with the subject line “Subscribe to Health links.”
The health of today’s children is frightening. The rate of childhood obesity is at an all-time high. Nearly one in three children, ages 2 to 19, are considered obese or overweight. Nearly 32 percent of children in the service area of Denton, Hood, Johnson, Parker, Tarrant and Wise counties are “at risk” or “overweight.” More than 27 percent of 2-year-olds are already “at risk” or “overweight.”

As a parent or caregiver, it’s important to get your kids off the couch and away from the TV or computer. Think about ways your family can be active together in your daily life, like going for a walk after dinner, riding bikes together or taking up a new sport that you can all play together.

There are plenty of opportunities to increase your family’s activity level. Here are a few ideas:

- **Dance party!** Dancing is a great way to increase your heart rate. It’s not about being a great dancer; just getting up and dancing around will get you and your child’s heart rate rising. Put on some music. Or have a “Dancing with the Stars” competition. Then, see who has the best dance moves or who can dance the longest without stopping.

- **Walk the dog.** Do you have a family dog? After dinner, grab your family and take your dog out for a walk around the block. It gives your pooch some exercise too.

- **Take a commercial break.** During commercial breaks have everyone do jumping jacks or pushups. Make it competitive; have a contest to see who can do the most.

- **Video games aren’t just for watching anymore.** A lot of video game systems get kids up and moving, instead of just sitting on the couch. Find a game that makes working out fun.

- **Go old school.** Jumping rope and playing with hula hoops are great ways to have fun and exercise without spending a lot of money. Pull that game of Twister® out of the closet. Or better yet — playing tag or tug of war is free!

- **Be a role model.** Get active with the children in your household even when you’re the taxi driver for all the family activities. Walk around the track during soccer practice. Do some simple stretches during dance class. Our children model our behavior more than we realize so why not teach them some healthy habits!

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**Tips for keeping your children active**

Parents – Pull this section out and give it to your kids.

Kids, this section is just for you! Right now, you may not be thinking about what you’ll look like or how you’ll feel in 10 or 20 years. But the choices you make today can affect how healthy you are when you get older. So, let’s get started on building a better body.

With computers, video games and TV, it’s a great time to be a kid. But if you spend too much time watching TV or playing video games, it can be bad for your body. A lot of kids your age don’t run or play enough. How about you?

Sometimes exercise doesn’t sound like much fun, but did you know you’re exercising every time you jump rope, dance around the house or ride your bike? Exercise can help you from getting sick. It can also help you do better at sports and keep your brain alert while doing homework.

Here are a few ways to boost your activity level indoors and outdoors:

**OUTDOORS**

- Jump rope.
- Play a game of touch football.
- Set up an obstacle course.
- Walk the dog.
- Plant flowers or mow the yard.
- Have a contest to see who can do the most pushups or situps.

**INDOORS**

- Have a dance off!
- Challenge your friends or family to a hula-hoop contest.
- Stretch.
- Play hide and seek or plan a scavenger hunt.
- During commercial breaks, run in place or do situps.
- Clean your room.

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**Denton** – **Hood** – **Johnson** – **Parker** – **Tarrant** – **Wise**
Alphabet Scavenger Hunt

Find something in your neighborhood that starts with each letter of the alphabet. Write down the item below or use separate sheets of paper if you have several people playing.

A ___________________________
B ___________________________
C ___________________________
D ___________________________
E ___________________________
F ___________________________
G ___________________________
H ___________________________
I ___________________________
J ___________________________
K ___________________________
L ___________________________
M ___________________________
N ___________________________
O ___________________________
P ___________________________
Q ___________________________
R ___________________________
S ___________________________
T ___________________________
U ___________________________
V ___________________________
W ___________________________
X ___________________________
Y ___________________________
Z ___________________________

Let's Get Moving!

It’s important to exercise your mind too. Try this word search for some easy ways to keep your heart pumping!

O C G T T X F O O T B A L L X G
X X E P O R P M U J I E N U R S
J K P C W E G Y M N A S T I C S
K U S H X E X E R C I S E L Q G
F W G Y A X E Y Y S E R L E Q N
A C T I V I T Y E Z M V P T R I
J U M P I N G J A C K S G Z M L
I S W A L K R H Z U E U E J B C
H U L A H O O P R R E I W H B Y
W Y Z T E L L A B T E K S A B C
F C L L T T X P A F I I A F G I
E C N A D A W C W T R S F P P B
B A S E B A L L L T L I O S Q K E
P L A Y F S L R H E A L T H Y S
G Z D M N R E H E A R T T Z T F

Activity
Baseball
Basketball
Bicycling
Dance

Exercise
Football
Frisbee
Gymnastics
Healthy

Heart
Run

Hula hoop
Jumping jacks
Jump rope
Play

Walk
Who says healthy eating doesn’t taste good?

Kids and parents, try this quick and yummy recipe for homemade chicken nuggets.

Chicken nuggets recipe

Ingredients
1 lb. boneless, skinless chicken breasts
1/4 cup whole wheat flour
1 tsp. paprika
1/4 tsp. black pepper
1/2 tsp. salt
2 egg whites
1 cup finely crushed cornflakes

Preparation
1. Preheat oven to 400°.
2. Cut chicken into 1-1/2-inch pieces.
3. In a bowl, combine flour, paprika, pepper and salt. Roll chicken pieces in the flour mixture to cover on all sides, shaking off excess flour. Set aside.
4. In a small bowl, lightly beat egg whites and buttermilk.
5. In another bowl, place the corn flakes.
6. Dip each chicken piece into egg mixture then coat with cornflakes, covering completely.
7. Place a wire rack on top of a baking sheet. Arrange chicken pieces in a single layer on rack. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes, turning halfway through cooking, until golden.

Yield: Four servings

Nutrition facts
Calories: 166
Fat: 2 g
Saturated Fat: 0
Cholesterol: 40 mg
Sodium: 641 mg
Carbohydrates: 12 g
Fiber: 1 g
Protein: 27 g

* Nutritional information is based on ingredients listed and serving size; any additions or substitutions to ingredients may alter the recipe’s nutritional content.

Nut allergy: If you have an allergy to nuts or nut products, read the packaging, labels, warnings and directions for all ingredients in this recipe to determine whether the non-nut ingredients in this recipe were manufactured in a plant that processes nut products. We recommend that you do not solely rely on our information. For additional information about a product, please contact the manufacturer.

For more healthy eating ideas, visit cookchildrens.org/checkup and look for the link to our Checkup Kitchen.
Childhood obesity is a hot topic and at the forefront of national and regional attention. It is a difficult and worrisome health issue. The statistics from our survey show that we have good reason to be worried.

In 2012, 87 percent of parents and caregivers in each of the counties in our region (Tarrant, Denton, Parker, Wise, Hood and Johnson) reported that their child’s overall health was excellent or very good. This compares to 78 percent of parents and caregivers in Texas and 84 percent of parents and caregivers nationally reporting that their child’s overall health was excellent or very good.

However, when we look at the percentage of obese or overweight children in each of our six counties, the statistics tell another story.

The issue of childhood obesity is complex and there are many factors that contribute to this. We hope that the information contained in this newsletter provided you with some useful tips on how to raise a healthier child. Make one small change in your family’s routine – it can make a world of difference!

This graph above illustrates the percentage of obese and overweight children in each county.