



National Survey: Majority of U.S. Parents Don't Enforce Good Health Habits in Their Household

Most Parents Are Unaware That Their Children's Generation May Have Shorter Lifespan Than Their Own YMCA of the USA, Eli Lilly and Company Create Healthy Family Home Program to Fight Childhood Obesity

NEW YORK, March 11, 2008 /PRNewswire via COMTEX News Network/ -- Nearly half of parents(1) admit their family is not eating a balanced diet, and more than three in four concede that some family members do not practice good health habits, according to a new national survey released today by YMCA of the USA and Eli Lilly and Company.

(Logo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20080311/NYTU023LOGO>)

(Logo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20031219/LLYLOGO>)

Nevertheless, most American parents expect their children's generation to have a longer lifespan than their own, or to live just as long, the survey showed. Such optimism has been rejected by research that has concluded that the current generation under the age of 18 may be the first in 200 years to have a shorter lifespan than their parents. The main culprit is obesity, caused by lack of physical activity and poor nutrition.

If not slowed or reversed, the rapid rise in childhood obesity could shorten life spans by as much as five years, according to researchers who say the problem has grown worse in the three years since their study was published in the New England Journal of Medicine in March 2005.

Responding to this crisis, YMCA of the USA and Lilly are partnering to create a program called Healthy Family Home (www.HealthyFamilyHome.org) to help the entire family work together at home to make healthier choices and live healthier lives. Successful pilot programs have been completed at five YMCAs, and the program launches nationwide during YMCA Healthy Kids® Day at more than 1,700 YMCAs next month.

"The family home is the place that defines, creates and predicts a family's lifelong health and well-being," said Lynne Vaughan, Chief Innovation Officer for YMCA of the USA. "Healthy Family Home empowers families to create a home environment that supports healthy living. It's a program that can work for any kind of family in any kind of home, regardless of whether the family lives near a YMCA."

Healthy Family Home provides families with practical, flexible tools and support for making lasting changes for a healthier, happier life. Actions aimed at the whole family that lead to small, sustained changes -- like eating better, getting exercise and connecting as a family -- are proven to have a long-term impact.

"We are a nation struggling with obesity and other chronic diseases that are lifestyle-related and often preventable," said Kristine Courtney, M.D., an internist and Director of Corporate Health Services at Lilly. "Lilly is proud to support the Healthy Family Home program, which jumpstarts and supports a family's efforts to be healthy in practical ways."

Healthy Family Home Starter Kit Offer Tips, Ideas Free On Website

In April, the "Healthy Family Home Starter Kit," a free guide with tips for healthy living, will be available at local Healthy Kids Day events and on www.HealthyFamilyHome.org. A preview is now available on the Healthy Family Home Web site.

The Healthy Family Home program is designed to work in any home and in any community, and lets families pick the actions and health goals that make the most sense for them. A sample from the Healthy Family Home Starter Kit:

1) Make family time. Sit down as a family for one meal a day. Research has shown that family meals are more nutritious than "solo" meals and kids who eat with their family end up making healthier snack choices. 2) Sneak in more physical activity. Plan a weekly family breakfast where you are the transportation. Skip the car, bus or train and ride bikes, walk or jog/run. 3) Get more fruits and vegetables in your diet. Have all family members identify their favorite fruit and write each one down on a list. Then fill a family fruit bowl with those fruits and keep it on the counter. This way everyone in the family will have easy access to their favorite fruit when they're looking for a snack. 4) Make getting exercise fun. Turn up the music and do chores together

(clean the house, wash windows, do laundry, etc.).

National Survey: Parents Unaware of Toll of Obesity on Children's Lifespan

According to an online survey conducted by Harris Interactive® on behalf of YMCA of the USA and Lilly, parents spend more time worrying about their children's health than their own (48 percent versus 33 percent), yet most believe their children's generation will live longer than their own (57 percent said longer; 32 percent said about the same; 11 percent said shorter).

The survey also showed that most parents know what behaviors are elements of a healthier lifestyle, yet many just cannot seem to put that knowledge into practice. For example, 91 percent of parents know their family should eat a balanced diet, yet only 56 percent say their household does, and 93 percent know their family should exercise regularly, yet only 45 percent say their household does. While 59 percent of parents say that everyone in the family knows what they should be doing to lead a healthy lifestyle, only 23 percent say everyone in the family practices good health habits.

The top five barriers to putting what is preached into practice include lack of time (48 percent), lack of motivation (46 percent), lack of willpower (45 percent), lack of money (36 percent) and lack of participation from some members of the family (29 percent).

Experts: Reverse Obesity Trend with Bite-Sized Changes in American Home Life

Experts in public health say that while genetics may play a role in obesity, the gene pool has not changed enough over recent decades to explain the dramatic rise in obesity. Rather, it's the nation's gradual move, "quarter step by quarter step," toward less physical activity and more food that is processed or high in saturated fat that has pushed up obesity rates, says Wesley Alles, Ph.D., Director of the Health Improvement Program at Stanford University and an adviser to Activate America®, the YMCA's response to our nation's growing health crisis.

That trend can be reversed, quarter step by quarter step, through programs like the YMCA-Lilly Healthy Family Home. Seemingly small but extremely manageable changes like adding a fruit or vegetable to every meal or getting the entire family together for a 20-minute walk around the block three times a week add up and make a difference, experts say.

"For all the interventions at school and elsewhere, kids do most of their eating and physical activity at home," says Jean Wiecha, Ph.D., Senior Research Scientist at Harvard School of Public Health and an adviser to Activate America®. "Kids are always observing their parents and their siblings and this is how they get an idea of what behavior is considered normal. The reverse is also true, children can affect grown-ups' behavior and health by influencing what foods the family eats and what activities they engage in. The home has a circular dynamic that is very different from what takes place in other settings like school or in the doctor's office."

Success at Pilots in San Diego, New York City, Indianapolis, Chicago and Marshalltown, Iowa

Five pilot programs at YMCAs across the country have already sparked small but meaningful changes in families. In New York City, the Carles family is now walking to the deli rather than driving. In San Diego, the Alcalá family now stocks the pantry with brown rice rather than white rice and buys cereal only if it has a minimum of three grams of fiber. In Indianapolis, the Rowland family's snack cabinet has been stripped of trans fats and relocated to the bottom of the refrigerator: the fruit drawer, filled with intriguing new choices including mangos and Ugly Fruit.

"What I got out of this program was more participation from my husband and kids as a family trying to be healthy. It's hard to be the only one. It doesn't work out," said Jennifer Alcalá, a client services worker, who lives with her husband, a mechanic, three sons and a nephew, age 14 and younger.

"Now I have a starting point so I can say 'Remember what we did at the Y? Let's eat fruit instead of something sugary. Let's walk around the block. Let's get back on track.' It's not just mom saying this on her own. Sometimes you need a third parent and that's what the Y is," said Bridget Carles, an after-school teacher who lives with her husband, a city government contract specialist, and their three teenagers.

Survey Details

The Family Health Issues survey was conducted online within the United States by Harris Interactive on behalf of YMCA of the USA and Lilly between February 6 and February 8, 2008, among 2,015 U.S. adults ages 18+, of whom 461 are parents or legal guardians of children under 18 who are living in their household. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated. Complete methodology is available upon request.

About YMCA of the USA

YMCA of the USA is the national resource office for the nation's 2,663 YMCAs, which serve nearly 20.2 million people each year, including 9.4 million children under the age of 18. Through a variety of programs and services focused on the holistic development of children and youth, health and well-being for all and family strengthening, YMCAs unite men, women and children of all ages, faiths, backgrounds, abilities and income levels. From urban areas to small towns, YMCAs have proudly served America's communities for nearly 160 years by building healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

Activate America® is the YMCA's response to our nation's growing health crisis. YMCAs are redefining themselves and engaging communities across the country to better support Americans of all ages who are struggling to achieve and maintain well-being of spirit, mind and body. Visit www.ymca.net to find your local YMCA.

About Eli Lilly and Company

Lilly, a leading innovation-driven corporation, is developing a growing portfolio of first-in-class and best-in-class pharmaceutical products by applying the latest research from its own worldwide laboratories and from collaborations with eminent scientific organizations. Headquartered in Indianapolis, Ind., Lilly provides answers -- through medicines and information -- for some of the world's most urgent medical needs. Additional information about Lilly is available at www.lilly.com.

About Harris Interactive

Harris Interactive is one of the largest and fastest-growing market research firms in the world. The company provides innovative research, insights and strategic advice to help its clients make more confident decisions which lead to measurable and enduring improvements in performance. Harris Interactive is widely known for The Harris Poll®, one of the longest running, independent opinion polls, and for pioneering online market research methods. The company has built what it believes to be the world's largest panel of survey respondents, the Harris Poll Online. Harris Interactive serves clients worldwide through its North American, European and Asian offices, and through a global network of independent market research firms. More information about Harris Interactive may be obtained at www.harrisinteractive.com.

(1) For the purposes of this survey, "parents" were defined as U.S. adults ages 18+ who are the parent or legal guardian of a child under the age of 18 living in their household (n= 461).

SOURCE YMCA of the USA and Eli Lilly

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