

INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY
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I hope everyone had a good holiday season. I know in our house there was lots of food, people, food, activity and food. After the first of the year many of us resolve to eat healthier foods and get more exercise. Information on nutrition and exercise is available from Iowa State University Extension. There is also a program you can participate in called Lighten Up Iowa. It is sponsored by the Iowa Games, Iowa Department of Public Health and Iowa State University Extension.

Lighten Up Iowa uses a team concept to promote good eating and physical activity habits. It is a five month program that will start on January 18 and run through May 31, 2006. To participate, teams are formed that consist of two to ten people. Success of the team is measured by the number of minutes of accumulated activity and the amount of weight loss. Winning teams are those that average the most minutes of activity per person over the five month program. For weigh loss, winning teams are those that lose the highest percentage of weight over the five month program. This is a great way to support each other in achieving exercise and weight loss goals that are most difficult when attempted alone.

Lighten Up Iowa was an idea that developed in an effort to try and change the upward trend in obesity that is occurring. In Iowa, there has been an alarming increase in obesity. In 1988, ten to fourteen percent of Iowans were considered obese and by 2002 the rate of obesity in the state of Iowa had reached twenty to twenty four percent which placed Iowa eleventh highest in overweight/obesity for adults in the nation. The underlying causes of obesity are sedentary lifestyles and poor nutritional choices which are addressed by Lighten Up Iowa. Obesity is linked to other chronic illnesses such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, arthritis, diabetes and stroke.

The benefits to improved diet (following the '5 A Day' recommendation for eating fruits and vegetables) and physical exercise include: fewer calories to aid weight management and loss, reduced risk for heart disease, cancer and stroke, lower blood pressure, helps manage diabetes, protects against diverticulosis, delays development of cataracts, increases ventilation function of the lungs, increases bone strength, slows the aging process, contributes to better sleep, enhances self image and provides an emotional and psychological boost.

To learn more about Lighten Up Iowa check out this website: <http://www.lightenupiowa.org> or to enroll your team with CATCH Life (the Community Wellness Committee initiative of Grundy Center) call the Grundy County Memorial Hospital at 319-824-5421 or contact the Grundy County Extension Office at 319-824-6979.