

INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY
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I hope you had a good holiday season! 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. Lighten Up Iowa is a program that can help you achieve healthier eating habits and increase exercise. 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 healthy eating and increase physical activity. This 100 Day Challenge starts on January 16 and runs through April 24, 2008. 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 total percent of weight lost by the team. Winning teams are those that average the most minutes of activity per person over the 100 Day Challenge. For weight loss, winning teams are those that lose the highest percentage of weight over the same time period. This is a great way for positive and motivated team members to support each other in achieving exercise and weight loss goals.

With a paid entry fee, each team member will receive a Lighten Up Iowa T-shirt, free entry into the Summer Iowa Games & Winter Iowa Games Fitness Walk, weekly nutrition and activity tips, chances to win monthly incentives and prizes, access to online resources and after logging on to your own personal dashboard (which includes a personal journal to track activity and nutrition, message center and leaderboard) you will receive a one year subscription to a lifestyle magazine.

Lighten Up Iowa began to address the upward trend in obesity. 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. Obesity is linked to chronic illnesses such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, arthritis, diabetes and stroke.

The benefits to improved diet 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 contact the Grundy Office of ISU Extension at 319-824-6979.