

Fact Sheet

VERB.™ It's what you do.

National, Multicultural Campaign Promoting Healthy Lifestyles Among Tweens

Overview: *The VERB.™ It's what you do. Youth Media Campaign (YMC), launched by the U.S. Department for Health and Human Services' (HHS) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is a national, multicultural media campaign intended to promote physical activity and displace unhealthy, risky behaviors among 9- to 13-year-olds, an age group also known as tweens. The campaign will use mass media, interactive media, partnerships and community efforts to help tweens maintain and increase their levels of physical activity.*

PREVENTION: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy G. Thompson says that it is crucial to stem the propensity among tweens to lead lifestyles devoid of enough physical activity. Secretary Thompson says that the increasing levels of overweight tweens and related diseases require action to change tween habits and improve their collective health.

Says Thompson: "The percentage of young people who are overweight has more than doubled in the past 20 years, and we are seeing serious related complications, including dramatic increases in Type II diabetes in adolescents. The campaign will send the message to children that being active is an important part of being healthy."

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: Physical activity promoted by VERB is not limited to the standard concepts of physical activity, such as calisthenics and team sports. Instead, VERB encourages tweens to embrace a physical activity that appeals to their personality, be it dancing, skateboarding, swimming or playing basketball. The point is for children to maintain and increase activity levels.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BENEFITS: The benefits of increased physical activity for tweens are numerous. From a physical standpoint, increased positive activity results in healthier bones and joints, less fat and more lean muscle mass. Physical activity also prevents or delays the development of high blood pressure. From a psychological standpoint, increased physical activity among tweens reduces feelings of depression and anxiety, heightens levels of self-esteem and promotes social well-being. Tweens who participate in high levels of activity are also less likely to use tobacco or drugs. And while there is no direct link between physical activity and academic performance, improved mental health resulting from increased activity may improve tweens' capacity to learn.

PARENTS AND INFLUENCERS: An important component of the campaign will reach the parents, youth leaders and educators with messages about what they can do to encourage healthy habits such as increased physical activity.

SCREEN TIME: Experts look to lifestyle behaviors in citing reasons for tweens being overweight. Chief among the behaviors leading to overweight tweens is the amount of time spent in a sedentary position, watching television, playing video games or using a computer.

American children spend 4.5 hours of leisure time each day in front of a screen. This includes watching television, video-tapes or DVDs; playing video games; using a computer; or browsing the Internet. Television is the medium with which youth spend the most time — 2.5 hours each day.

SCREEN TIME STATISTICS: Following are statistics related to screen time and the sedentary lifestyle that VERB aims to displace by encouraging tweens to maintain and increase physical activity:

- Twenty-six percent of American youth watch four or more hours of television per day.
- Sixty-seven percent of American youth watch two or more hours per day.
- Almost half (48 percent) of all families with children have all four of the latest media staples: TV, VCR, video game equipment and a computer.
- The bedroom of the 21st century child is a multimedia environment. More than half (57 percent) have a TV in the bedroom; 39 percent have video game equipment; 30 percent have a VCR; 20 percent a computer and 11 percent Internet access.

MEDIA OUTREACH: The campaign will use the best principals of marketing and communications to deliver important messages to tweens about the importance of building healthy habits early in life — with the full knowledge that today's tweens are very savvy about the messages that are being delivered to them. The campaign will be fun and will include critical components such as a national events tour and interactive media — the same campaign elements used by those who are successfully reaching young people.

TIMING: The first VERB advertisements aired June 17 on media outlets attractive to children. Planned as a five-year effort, the campaign has received two years of funding. The first year of the campaign will focus on getting youth excited about increasing the amount of positive physical activity in their lives, and helping their parents, youth leaders and educators to see the importance of physical activity to the overall health of their children. The brand introduction continued to evolve over the summer of 2002, with the full launch of the campaign in the fall of 2002.

CAMPAIGN PARTNERS: Following are major corporate partners and contractors involved in communicating the VERB campaign to the public.

Media Companies:

- ABC Disney
- AOL Time Warner
- Viacom
- Primedia

Advertising, Marketing, Public Relations:

- Publicis Groupe (Frankel, Saatchi & Saatchi, Publicis Dialog)
- Garcia 360°
- A Partnership, Inc.
- PFI Marketing
- G&G Advertising

Hispanic/Latino Media:

- Radio Unica
- Telemundo
- Univision

Asian American/Pacific Islander Media:

- World Journal
- KSCTI TV
- Korean Times

African American Media:

- American Urban Radio Network
- Essence Magazine
- Heart and Soul

Native American Media:

- Indian Country Today
- American Indian Report
- Oklahoma Indian Times

For more information on about the campaign see www.cdc.gov/youthcampaign

Parent Web site www.VERBparents.com

Youth Web site www.VERBnow.com

CDC protects people's health and safety by preventing and controlling diseases and injuries, enhances health decisions by providing credible information on critical health issues, and promotes healthy living through strong partnerships with local, national, and international organizations

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