



**INNOVATION**

**Early Interventions to Combat  
Childhood Obesity**

April 20, 2006

# CSREES Kobbé Grant

- What we promised
- What we have delivered
- Where we are headed

# What we promised

1. Establish advisory committee
  1. Identify key nutrition and human development professionals in the national Extension system
  2. Secure involvement of states with age-paced parenting materials
2. Conduct literature review focusing on the role parents
3. Develop key messages for parents
4. Integrate into *Just in Time Parenting* and distribute

# Background work: connecting the dots

- NRI PI 2005 meeting in Orlando
- Children's Nutrition Research Center (CNRC) at Baylor College of Medicine in August, 2005

# Extension Childhood Obesity Prevention Team

- [Drew Betz](#), Whatcom County Extension Educator, Washington State University
- [Diana DelCampo](#), Extension Family Life Specialist, Child Development & Family Life Specialist, New Mexico State University
- [Shirley Gerrior](#), CSREES National Program Leader in Human Nutrition
- [Carole Gnatuk](#), Extension Child Development Specialist, University of Kentucky
- [Sheryl Hughes](#), Developmental Psychologist, Children's Nutrition Research Center, Baylor College of Medicine

# Extension Childhood Obesity Prevention Team

- [Sally Martin](#), Human Development Specialist, University of Nevada, Reno
- [Susan Nitzke](#), Nutrition Specialist, University of Wisconsin
- [Madeleine Sigman-Grant](#), Extension Health and Nutrition Specialist, University of Nevada, Reno
- [Sue Snider](#), Nutrition Specialist, University of Delaware
- [Beth Van Horn](#), Centre County Extension Educator, Penn State University
- [Susan Walker](#), Extension Child Development & Family Support Specialist, University of Maryland

# Literature Review

- Dr. Peggy Brown, with the active assistance of all the members of our team
- Available at <http://ag.udel.edu/extension/fam/>
- Includes **Highlights of the Lit Review**

# Lit Review: Caveats

- 1) Extremely challenging: multiple potential causes.
- 2) Evolutionary mechanism that puts humans at risk in an obesogenic environment
- 3) The playing field is not level
- 4) Do no harm.



# Recommendations

- Aim prevention at population level.
  - All parents of children, prenatally → 6 years
  - Target children (and their parents) of low income, obese parents
- Multi-component, multiple level strategies.
- Create environments that make it easy to do the right thing.

# Parents

- play key role in
  - Food consumed in and outside the home
  - Children's food preferences
  - Exercise habits
  - Amount and timing of television
- often have their good efforts overridden by broader environmental influences

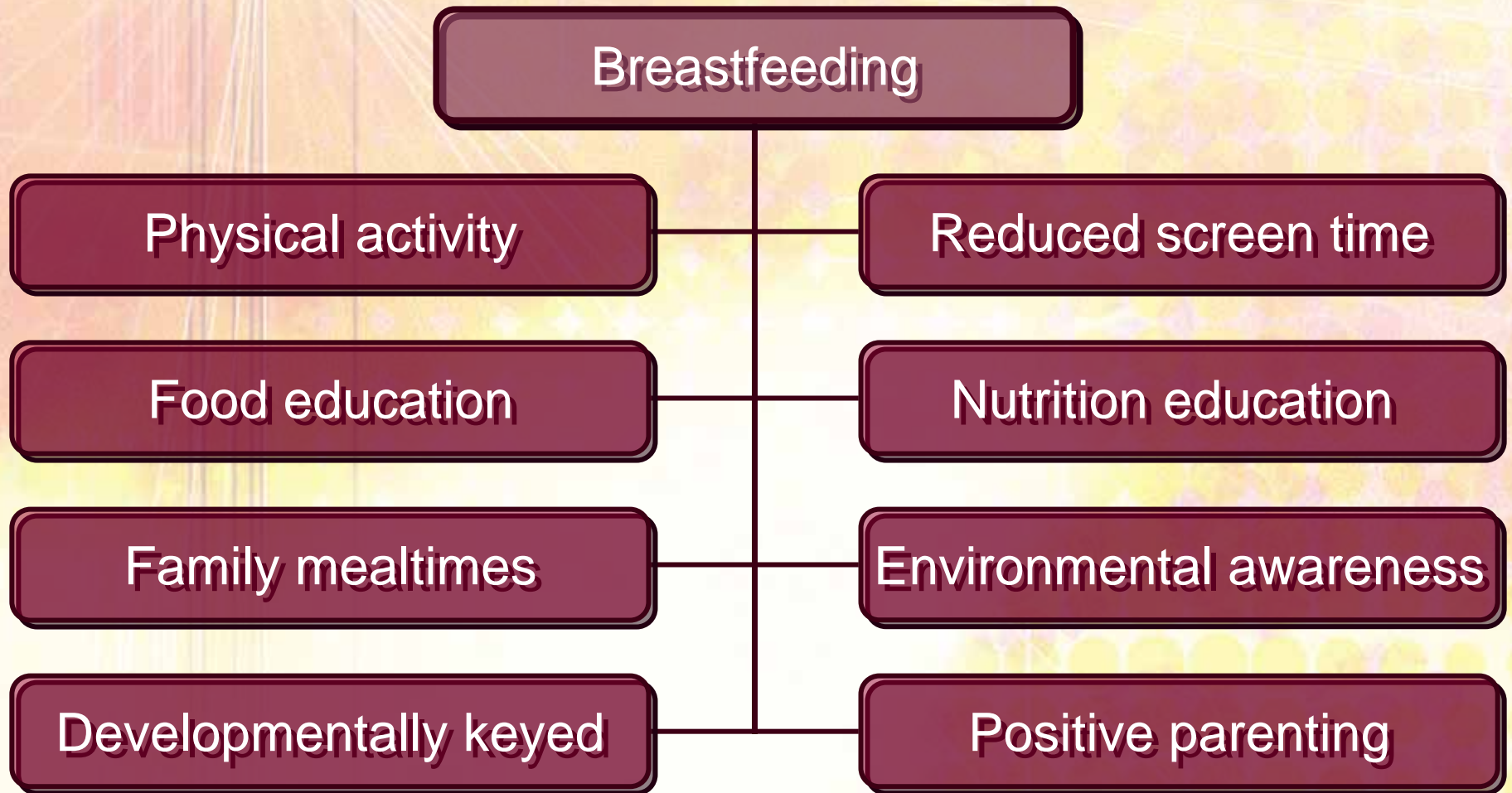
# Parenting styles and feeding

- Parenting style, income and parental weight status need to be considered.
- Key roles for parents: modeling healthy eating behavior and **not** restricting intake.
  - Excess parental control may decrease child's ability to self regulate.

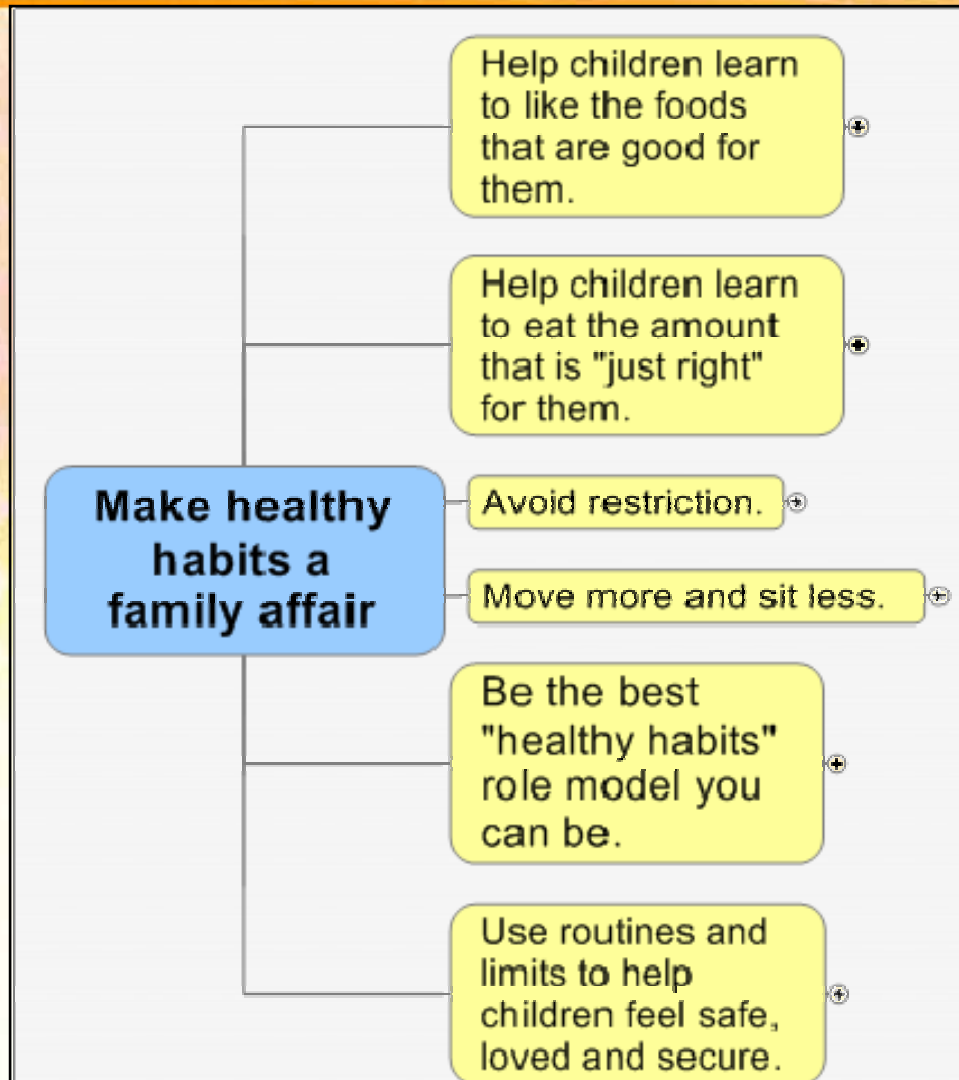
# Factors associated with lowering obesity risks

- Regular physical exercise
- High dietary fiber intake (veggies, fruits)
- Healthful food choice environments
- Breast-feeding
- Shared family meals
- Mother's knowledge of nutrition
- Positive parental role modeling

# Broad themes to promote...



# Key messages for parents



# Help children learn to like the foods that are good for them.



- Offer healthful food regularly.
  - Breastfeed
- Children have to learn to like fruits, veggies and whole grains.
  - It may take 8 - 15 times.
  - Be a great role model.
- Accent foods that are nutrient rich.
  - Limit foods that are low in nutrients and high in fats and calories
  - Avoid sweetened drinks and limit fruit juice
  - Offer milk at meals and water between meals.
- Limit children's exposure to advertising.

# Help children learn to eat the amount that is “just right.”



- Eat when you are hungry, stop when you are full.
  - Recognize hunger cues.
  - Avoid using food as a reward or comfort.
- Mind portion sizes.
  - Most will overeat when given large portion sizes.
  - Let children serve themselves.



# Avoid restriction.



- Restriction nearly always backfires – and makes the problem worse.
- Never put a child on a diet to lose weight unless under a doctor's close supervision.
- Make food choices in your home as healthful as possible.
- Help children **grow into** healthy weights by accenting healthy habits – not diets.
  - Some children are born to be large, some small. Every child can be healthy.

# Move more. Sit less.



- Help everyone find physical activity they can enjoy every day.
  - Physical activity tends to drop in teen years.
- Think up ways to have **active** family fun.
- Limit screen time for everyone in the family to less than 2 hours a day.
  - Avoid screen time for children under 2.
  - No TVs or computers in bedrooms.
- Limit children's exposure to advertising.

# Be the best “healthy habits” role model you can be.



- Be as healthy as possible.
  - Being overweight presents special challenges for pregnant moms and their babies.
- Evolve toward a healthy weight by focusing on healthy habits, not diets.
- Small changes over time can make a BIG difference!
- Your child learns by watching and imitating you.
- Love your body. Your child will pick up on your cues and learn to like or dislike his/her body.

# Use routines and limits to help children feel safe, loved.



- Set regular times for family meals, snacks, naps and bedtimes.
- Eat better. Eat together. Focus on each other. Make family mealtimes a fun and positive time.
- Involve children in choosing and preparing healthful foods.
  - Kids are more likely to eat what they help to make.
- Build activity into your routines with family chores and family walks.
- Plan fun times together – “family glue.”

# What we are working on

- Sharing our resources – putting them to work
  - Drew Betz presentation at NW Parenting Conference
  - Priester conference
  - Nemours Health & Prevention project for obesity prevention efforts in child care settings
- Integrating key messages into Extension's *Just In Time Parenting*
- *On the horizon:* NRI project with Children's Nutrition Research Center (CNRC) at Baylor College of Medicine

# Discussion and Feedback

- How would you change the key messages?
  - What would you add? Subtract? Modify?
- For parents, should this be framed as
  - Make healthy habits a family affair (gently)
  - Help your child have a healthy weight (straight on)