

Watermelon Board Stalwart in its Effort to Fight Obesity in Children

NWPB Targets Kids with Fun Marketing Tools

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As obesity in U.S. children reaches higher-than-ever levels, the National Watermelon Promotion Board remains committed to targeting a portion of its marketing efforts toward children. “It’s easier to form a good habit than it is to break a bad one, and habits you learn in childhood tend to stay with you into adulthood. That’s why it’s important for children to develop a 5-A-Day routine early on,” said Samantha Winters, communications director for the National Watermelon Promotion Board.

According to the National Institute of Diabetes & Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), one in five American children is overweight, twice as many as just a decade ago. Since overweight children face a greater risk than other youngsters of developing heart disease, diabetes and other serious health problems, scientists are focusing more attention on the prevention and treatment of obesity in young people.

“Many of our marketing efforts are geared directly to children, particularly on our Web site. When kids perceive watermelon and other fruits and vegetables to be ‘fun’ foods, they are more likely to eat them,” said Winters. The board’s site (www.watermelon.org) features a kids’ section with downloadable coloring book pages, fun trivia, puzzles and more.

“Of course, watermelon is a fairly easy sell to kids because it’s sweet,” said Winters. “In theory, it’s an easy sell to parents because it’s nutritious, but most adults aren’t in the habit of eating well. So we’re hoping that their kids’ enthusiasm will inspire them as well.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 1998 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Data, only one in four Americans (24%) eats five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day.

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That percentage is even less in children, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Continuing Surveys of Food Intakes by Individuals, 1997, which shows that while overall, Americans are eating 4.4 servings of fruits and vegetables daily, children fall even shorter of the five-a-day goal with just 3.4 servings each day.

Containing relatively no fat or cholesterol, and low in calories is certified as heart-healthy by the American Heart Association, making it an ideal food for those watching their weight. And while many people perceive watermelon to be a summertime picnic treat, imports make watermelon available year 'round. The NWPB has also worked with renowned chefs over the years in developing a variety of innovative recipes using watermelon as a key ingredient in everything from main courses and breads to soups and desserts. These recipes are also available on the NWPB's Web site.

The National Watermelon Promotion Board, based in Orlando, FL, is a non-profit organization of 3,100 growers, shippers and importers. Additional information is available by calling the board or by logging onto its Web site, www.watermelon.org.

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