

May/June 2023



New Jersey
Healthy Kids
Initiative
Newsletter



The mission of the New Jersey Healthy Kids Initiative (NJHKI) is to improve child health through evidence-based research, education, and practice in nutrition, culinary literacy, and physical activity. NJHKI's vision is that New Jersey children will be the healthiest in the country.

Working in collaboration with the New Jersey Institute for Food, Nutrition, and Health (IFNH) and the Child Health Institute of New Jersey (CHINJ), two leading research institutes at Rutgers University, the NJHKI connects with schools to identify and work together to help address which nutrition education, culinary literacy, and physical activity policy, system, and environmental needs are currently unmet.

National Mental Health Month

May is Mental Health Month and organizations such as Mental Health America (MHA) and others work towards spreading the importance of addressing mental health. Life can be full of stress and anxiety, but taking care of our mental health can make a huge difference to keep ourselves and families healthy.

This year the MHA campaign on Mental Health Month focuses on issues such as: safe and stable housing, healthy home environment, neighborhoods and towns, and the outdoors and nature. Be sure to go to their website to learn more about these topics along with other tips in addressing our mental health.



Visit mhanational.org to learn more.

Practicing Mindfulness

Maintaining your mental health and wellness is important. One way to do it can be through daily meditation and mindfulness exercises. Check out our [Yoga & Mindfulness Program](#).

Mindfulness exercises can include a type of meditation where you focus on being aware of what you're feeling. One way to do this is through breathing exercises.

Here is a breathing exercise from the Mayo Clinic anyone can practice to support their mindfulness. Try to incorporate it in your daily routine or at times when you are feeling anxious or stressed.

While you are breathing in, try to become aware of your thoughts and clear your mind, focusing on your breath and body.

Visit [Mayo Clinic](https://www.mayoclinic.org) to learn more.

1. Sit or stand in a comfortable position
2. Close your eyes
3. Take a deep breath In through your nose for 3 seconds
4. Let that breath out through your mouth for 3 seconds
5. Do this three times

You can practice variations of this exercise and increase the amount of inhale/exhale times from 3 seconds to 4 or 5 seconds.

Electrolytes & Hydration

As the weather starts to warm up, we should focus on the importance of electrolytes for hydration and health.

Why are electrolytes important?

Electrolytes are minerals that conduct electricity when combined with water. They're essential for a variety of bodily functions such as regulating your body's pH balance, helping your muscles contract and relax, and controlling your heart rate. When you become dehydrated, your body's electrolyte balance can be thrown off, leading to symptoms such as cramping, headaches, fatigue, and nausea.

How can we ensure we're getting electrolytes?

Drink plenty of water or other electrolyte-rich drink such as coconut water. Eat foods high in electrolytes, such as bananas, oranges, spinach, seeds, and yogurt.

Lemon Drink Water Recipe



Ingredients:

- 1 Liter of water
- 2 lemons
- 1 teaspoon of honey
- 1/4 teaspoon of sea salt

Instructions:

1. In a pitcher, combine the water, honey, and sea salt.
2. Squeeze the lemons into the pitcher and stir to combine.
3. Refrigerate for 1 hour before drinking.
4. Enjoy!

NJHKI Updates



NJHKI teamed up with Forging Youth Resilience (FYR) to introduce a nutrition curriculum for FYR's 24 clubs at the Local Club Summit in Denver, CO. FYR is a non-profit organization that enables young people to develop physical and mental resilience by providing access to community-based fitness programs. The nutrition curriculum was created by the NJHKI team and IFNH student ambassadors, with Dr. Peggy Policastro and Dr. Erin Comollo leading the seminar and highlighting two of the twelve lessons designed to improve the fitness of young athletes through nutrition and culinary education. Read more [here](#).

The 2022-23 Rutgers Culture of Health School Program is wrapping up in June. The program encouraged healthy eating habits and regular exercise for over 750 students throughout the state. Children demonstrated enthusiasm and eagerness to participate in the lessons, indicating a strong desire to adopt healthy lifestyles.

This year's RCHSP success would not have been possible without all our student workers and interns!

ANNA ALESSIO
JILL CHAPMAN
STEPHANIE DE LA FUENTE
BENJAMIN DODIMEAD
RACHEL HO
SAM FRIEDMAN
GABBY HARRISON
DE'ASIA JONES
ACELINA KIYAS
YOUSOF MAMoor
CRYSTELLE MARTINS

RABIAH MIAN
MARIA NABIH
ZAIB NAGEEB
LOLA OLATUBOSUN
KARIN PALOMINO
ARIANNA RILEY
SARA RUBIANO
LUIS SOLANO-SARABIA
ALESSANDRA SOMMER
JACELYN TARN
MACEY VIDAS
NICOLAS VILLEGAS
NATALIA WATROBA



Fruit Acai Bowl

As the school year winds down and summer approaches, it's important to continue to stay fueled with nutritious foods. Try making this recipe with your family as a tasty mid-day snack!



Ingredients:

- 1 cup frozen acai puree
- 1 banana
- 1/2 cup strawberries
- 1/2 cup blueberries
- 1/4 cup granola
- 1/4 cup shredded coconut
- 1 tablespoon honey

Instructions:

1. Place the acai puree, banana, strawberries, and blueberries In a blender.
2. Blend until smooth
3. Place the mixture Into a bowl and top with fruits, granola, chia seeds, coconut flakes, and honey.
4. Serve and enjoy!

Want to stay up-to-date on all of the exciting work the New Jersey Healthy Kids Initiative is doing and hear more about upcoming events and opportunities for collaboration?

**Join our
mailing list!**

WE ARE ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

Make sure to follow us to stay up-to-date with what NJHKI is up to!



RUTGERS

New Jersey Institute for Food,
Nutrition, and Health

The Child Health Institute
of New Jersey