

# 1. Why Are Nutrition and Physical Activity Important for Youth?

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## Did You Know?

- 17 percent of children age 12-19 are overweight.
- Type 2 diabetes is becoming more common among children and adolescents, particularly in American Indians, African-Americans, and Hispanics/Latinos.
- Nearly one in three adults has high blood pressure.
- 17 percent of Americans have high blood cholesterol.

The young people you work with will grow up to be leaders of tomorrow. Over the last decade, we have discovered much about the relationship between poor nutrition and inactivity and poor health. We see the serious outcomes that unhealthy eating and physical inactivity have had on the community. For example, soaring blood pressure levels and diabetes can lead to kidney failure, amputation, and strokes. Despite increased awareness and these tragic outcomes, poor eating and physical inactivity behaviors continue, especially among adolescents.

## Common Youth Behaviors and Beliefs

Focus groups conducted with 11- to 18-year-olds about nutrition and physical activity for the development of this manual revealed:

- Youth frequently buy chips, sodas, apple pies, and candy bars for lunches and snacks at school snack stores and vending machines.
- They prefer to eat fast foods at lunch instead of cafeteria food or lunch brought from home.
- They do not eat many fruits and vegetables.
- They average about 5 hours of TV viewing a day.
- They do not participate in regular physical activity outside of organized sports.
- They realize that good health is important, but they don't think that it is important for them.

Increased consumption of high-fat fast foods, high-sugar soda, and candy, coupled with decreased participation in regular physical activity, contribute to the high incidence of overweight and other health risks among adolescents. When you consider the constant amount of unhealthy diet and physical inactivity images and messages, it's no surprise that these unsound behaviors and attitudes are so prevalent. Fast-food outlets proliferate (to date, 170,000 nationwide); soda manufacturers spend billions of dollars on clever advertising and marketing campaigns to ensure brand loyalty. Technological breakthroughs such as cordless phones, remote control devices, video games, and the Internet have made life more sedentary and less active for youths and adults. But despite the realities of modern society, there are many positive ways to help influence the nutrition and physical activity attitudes and behaviors of young people.

## 2. How Can Your Program Make a Difference?

1. Assess the nutrition and physical activity behaviors of youth, and help them make plans for improvement. If possible, encourage youth to monitor their nutrition and physical activity habits on a continuous basis throughout offered programs and emphasize gradual improvement.
2. Teach skills that can help them improve their nutrition and physical activity choices. This can include identifying reliable sources of information on nutrition and physical activity, learning to read food labels, analyzing foods for nutritional content, and setting goals to incorporate more physical activity into their day.
3. Incorporate interactive nutrition and physical activity learning experiences into your programming. These can include analyzing food advertisements and other influences on eating and physical activity, taste testing a variety of foods, measuring the fat content of popular fast foods, inviting a nutrition or physical activity expert to speak at a meeting, and visiting a local recreation facility such as a swimming pool, golf course, tennis court, or gym.
4. Sponsor youth-driven projects that can promote community nutrition and physical activity, including increasing the availability of healthful foods at their school or in their neighborhood.
5. Model and promote healthful eating. Offer healthful meals and snacks during program meetings, and encourage youth to participate in regular physical activity.

## 3. Incorporating Nutrition and Physical Activity Into Youth Development Topics

Listed below are a number of sessions that might be part of a youth development program. Under each session, examples of how to incorporate messages and activities related to good nutrition and physical activity into the session are provided.

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### Session I. Introduction

- *Program objectives and ground rules*
  - Highlight your program's goal of improving youth nutrition and physical activity. Emphasize that eating well and being physically active are important and relevant to young people.
  - Play a trivia game to determine their nutrition and physical activity knowledge.
  - Offer a healthful meal and/or snack.
  - Engage youth in a physical activity session.

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### Session II. Self-identity

- *Self-esteem, feeling good about yourself*
- *Self-direction, taking responsibility*
- *Taking care of yourself (personal hygiene)*

Taking good care of your body is an important part of establishing self-esteem and confidence. Young people can take responsibility for their health by improving their food and physical activity choices.

- Have youth complete food and physical activity records to assess their nutrition and physical activity behaviors. Review the *MyPyramid* daily nutrition and physical activity recommendations. Discuss their current diet and physical activity behaviors, and brainstorm ways they can be improved.
- Offer a healthful meal and/or snack.
- Engage youth in a physical activity session.

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## Session III. Family Roles and Support System

- *Identifying family roles and responsibilities*
- *Learning to deal with feelings of anxiety and frustration toward family members*

Family environment plays a large role in fostering and modeling appropriate eating and physical activity behaviors. Making trips to the grocery store, preparing and sharing an evening meal, or taking a family outing are great opportunities to set good examples and strengthen communication. Encourage youth to get involved with family meal planning and preparation. Promote family physical activities, such as walks to the store or church, shooting hoops at the basketball court, playing catch at the park, bowling, tennis, or miniature golf.

- Have youth plan and prepare a healthful meal, and invite parents and family members to attend. Tell parents about the value of sharing healthful meals and physical activity experiences with their children.
- Invite a chef to conduct a healthy cooking demonstration to demonstrate basic food preparation and safe food-handling techniques.
- Plan a field trip to a local grocery store and discuss smart shopping strategies.
- Offer a healthful meal and/or snack.
- Engage youth in a physical activity session.

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## Session IV. Peer Relationships

- *Dealing with peer pressure*
- *Identifying negative influences and behaviors*

Young people today face many lifestyle choices. Peer pressure, peer influence, and the media all play significant roles in the decisions that youth make about what they eat and how they spend their free time. Help youth identify and deal with the negative messages and influences.

- Discuss the roles peer pressure, peer influence, and the media play in youth dietary and physical activity behaviors.

- Have youth identify role models (e.g., sports figures, relatives, or teachers) whom they believe follow a healthy lifestyle.
- Invite a local sports figure to speak to the youth about the positive effect healthy eating and physical activity habits have had on his or her successful career.
- Offer a healthful meal and/or snack.
- Engage youth in a physical activity session.

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## Session V. Effective Expressions

### ■ *Verbal and nonverbal forms of communication*

Young people today often place a lot of importance on physical appearance. How they decide whether someone is attractive or not can definitely affect how they communicate both verbally and nonverbally. Helping youth to be aware of what influences their forms of communication with others and to learn how to overcome bias are important elements in fostering effective communication skills.

- Encourage youth to focus on appreciating internal versus external qualities.
- Offer a healthful meal and/or snack.
- Engage youth in a physical activity session.

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## Session VI. Setting Goals

### ■ *Identifying long-term and short-term goals*

Goal-setting is an important part of taking responsibility for health.

- Have youth identify healthy behaviors they would like to establish and develop plans to accomplish them.
- Have youth complete a weekly or monthly activity goal sheet to set objectives and track their progress.
- Offer a healthful meal and/or snack.
- Engage youth in a physical activity session.

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## Session VII. Career Development

There are many exciting and innovative health-related employment opportunities in both the public and private sectors.

- Invite a guest speaker to talk about career opportunities in a nutrition or physical activity-related field.
- Offer a healthful meal and/or snack.
- Engage youth in a physical activity session.

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## Session VIII. Growth and Opportunity

### ■ *Dealing with issues of puberty and sexuality*

During adolescence, youth often experience concern about their body weight, shape, and the changes their bodies are going through. Adolescent insecurities combined with our society's obsession with physical appearance can lead to an unhealthy body image. Both boys and girls feel pressure to live up to images they see portrayed in society. As a result, they often place unrealistic expectations on one another and have unrealistic definitions of what is considered attractive. Young men, in particular, have a major influence on how young women view their bodies. It is important for youth to develop an appreciation of diversity and, at the same time, learn to accept their own bodies.

- Hold a discussion about how society influences how they feel about themselves and others.
- Discuss the ways that young men influence how young women feel about their bodies.
- Discuss the ways that young men can be more respectful of their female peers.
- Discuss the ways that young women can command respect from young men.
- Offer a healthful meal and/or snack.
- Engage youth in a physical activity session.

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## **Session IX. Abstinence and Contraceptive Methods**

- Offer a healthful meal and/or snack.
- Engage youth in a physical activity session.

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## **Session X. Substance Abuse and Violence**

- Offer a healthful meal and/or snack.
- Engage youth in a physical activity session.

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## **Session XI. Divorce, Suicide, Death, and Bereavement**

- Offer a healthful meal and/or snack.
- Engage youth in a physical activity session.

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## **Session XII. Closing**

Summarize what has been learned about eating healthful foods and getting regular physical activity.

- Have youth complete a food and physical activity record to evaluate their progress—what they have learned and any changes or improvements they have made along the way.
- Offer a healthful meal and/or snack.
- Engage youth in a physical activity session.



## 4. Incorporating Nutrition and Physical Activity Into Special Events

### 1. Set up a nutrition and/or physical activity booth at your next event

- Have information available for people to take home. Chapter 7, “Resources,” lists various organizations to contact for nutrition and physical activity materials.
- Give away nutrition and physical activity-related prizes such as sporting equipment, gift certificates to selected restaurants, or cookbooks.
- Have qualified people available to answer questions or make referrals to other resources/organizations. (See “Nutrition and Physical Activity Guest Speakers, Topics, and Contacts” section on page 37.)
- Set up a visual display. (See below for examples.)

#### **It’s all a matter of choice**

Make a list of foods to choose less often and foods to choose more often. Read the Nutrition Facts label of selected foods to compare the % DV for total fat and saturated fat to decide which foods to use. Choose foods with the lower % DV for fat and saturated fat for the Choose More Often column, and choose foods with a higher % DV for fat and saturated fat for the Choose Less Often column. Foods with 5% DV or less for fat contribute a small amount of fat while ones with 20% DV or more for fat contribute a large amount. Provide information on the calories and grams of total fat and saturated fat in each food. Some examples include:

*Choose less often\***Choose more often\****Whole milk**

Total Fat: 8g 13% DV  
Saturated Fat: 5g 25% DV

**Fat-Free milk**

Total Fat: 0g 0% DV  
Saturated Fat: 0g 0% DV

**Packaged muffin**

Total Fat: 12g 19% DV  
Saturated Fat: 2.5g 12% DV

**Bagel**

Total Fat: 1.5g 2% DV  
Saturated Fat: 0.5g 3% DV

**Toaster pastry**

Total Fat: 6g 9% DV  
Saturated Fat: 1g 5% DV

**Low-fat granola bar**

Total Fat: 3g 5% DV  
Saturated Fat: 0.5g 3% DV

**Mac 'n' cheese**

Total Fat: 18.5g 28% DV  
Saturated Fat: 4.5g 23% DV

**Red beans and rice**

Total Fat: 0g 0% DV  
Saturated Fat: 0g 0% DV

**Packaged ramen soup**

Total Fat: 8g 12% DV  
Saturated Fat: 4g 20% DV

**Healthful canned soup version**

Total Fat: 2g 3% DV  
Saturated Fat: 0.5g 2.5% DV

**Potato chips**

Total Fat: 10g 16% DV  
Saturated Fat: 2.5g 13% DV

**Pretzels**

Total Fat: 1g 2% DV  
Saturated Fat: 0g 0% DV

**Packaged cookies**

Total Fat: 10g 16% DV  
Saturated Fat: 3g 6% DV

**Graham or animal crackers, fig bars**

Total Fat: 3g 4% DV  
Saturated Fat: 0g 0% DV

\*% DV based on a 2,000 calorie diet

### **Fat in fast foods**

- Measure out the different amounts of fat in different high-fat and lowfat fast-food menu items (4 grams of fat are equal to 1 teaspoon); mound up the fat or use display tubes available for purchase from Nasco Nutrition Aids. (To order call 1-800-558-9595.)
- Have people guess how far they would have to walk to burn off the amount of calories from eating different fast-food menu items. For example, a 155-pound male walking 20 minutes at a pace of 15 mph burns about 115 calories. (Visit the Activity Calorie Calculator Web site at <http://www.primusweb.com/cgi-bin/fpc/actcalc.pl> to calculate the amount of calories burned for 100 other activities.)\*
- Distribute nutrition information from various fast-food restaurants and/or the *Eating on the Run* handout found in Chapter 6.

### **Do you know how much sugar is in your favorite drink?**

- Measure out the different amounts of sugar in sodas and other fruit drinks and juices. Put the sugar in a mound or use sugar display tubes available for purchase from Nasco Nutrition Aids. (To order call 1-800-558-9595.)
- Have samples of drinks with no added sugar (100% fruit juice or water).
- Have people guess the amount of sugar in a 64-ounce fountain soda (212 grams or 54 teaspoons of sugar).
- Pass out the *Do You Know What Is In Your Soda?* handout found in Chapter 6.

### **Salt in foods**

- Measure out the amount of salt in various foods. Put the salt in a mound or use display tubes available from Nasco (1-800-558-9595).
- Taste test various low-sodium and salt-free products (canned goods, seasonings, crackers).
- Have people guess how much sodium is in various foods (pizza, fast foods, macaroni and cheese mixes, canned or instant soups, processed cheeses like American, or processed meats such as sausage, bacon, pepperoni, bologna, or hot dogs).
- Distribute nutrition information from the American Heart Association. Visit [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org) for information on how to order materials, or check your phone book for the American Heart Association phone number in your division or region.

\*Links to non-Federal organizations are provided solely as a service to our users. Links do not constitute an endorsement of any organization by USDA/FNS or DHHS/CDC or the Federal Government, and none should be inferred. The USDA/FNS or DHHS/CDC is not responsible for the content of the individual organization Web pages found at this link.

### **Eat fruits and vegetables every day**

- Taste test seasonal fruits and vegetables. Try tasting four different varieties of apples, pears, or citrus fruits or four types of crunchy vegetables such as carrots, jicama, celery, and radishes. (Contact the local farmers' market or grocery store for donations.)
- Sample a fresh fruit smoothie (requires electricity, blender, and an ice chest).
- Distribute recipes for fruit and vegetable snacks or meals, coupons for fresh produce, coupons from a local juice or smoothie shop, dates and locations for local farmers' markets, and information on the importance of eating fruits and vegetables every day.
- Contact your local Fruits and Veggies—More Matters Coordinator at your local health department for promotional materials, posters, brochures, and giveaways.

### **Physical activity challenge**

- Set up activity circuits or an obstacle course (see Chapter 4 for station ideas). Make sure to include physical activities for a variety of abilities and age groups. Award a prize or healthful snack (orange wedges, grapes, or banana) to everyone who participates.
- Distribute information about the importance of regular physical activity.
- Invite local community groups to distribute information about sports and recreation activities available in the community for all age groups.
- Invite a local sports personality to talk about the importance of being physically active.

### **Healthful food for the soul**

- Taste test recipes from the Appendixes: Mushroom Brown Rice Pilaf, Mouth-Watering Oven-Fried Fish, Vegetables with a Touch of Lemon, Oven-Baked Sweet Potato Fries, or 1-2-3 Peach Cobbler.
- Display healthful cooking products (oils, cooking sprays, egg substitute, salt-free spices) and provide information on lowfat cooking tips (see the *Healthy Cooking* handout in Appendix 8.2).
- Encourage people to guess the amount of fat they would save in a year if they did not put butter on their toast every morning. (1 teaspoon of butter has 4 grams of fat; 365 days in a year x 4 grams of fat = 1,460 grams of fat each year; 1 gram of fat has 9 calories; 1,460 grams of fat X 9 calories = 13,140 calories each year.) This adds up to about 3½ lbs. (3,500 calories = 1 lb.) of extra weight each year if

the calories consumed exceed an individual's recommended amount for each day! Of course, this assumes that you only put 1 teaspoon of butter on your toast. Try fruit preserves or apple butter for topping toast!

- Display household products that help you cut back on the fat when cooking (e.g., indoor grill, steamer, nonstick cooking pan).
- Pass out copies of recipes and healthful cookbooks. Copies of *Keep the Beat – Heart Healthy Recipes* from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute are available from the National Institutes of Health (NIH Publication No. 2921 or download from the Web site at [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/infectr/ic-ordr.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/infectr/ic-ordr.htm)). To order call 301-592-8573.

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## 2. Support nutrition and physical activity at your organized sports events

- Set up a visual display or booth similar to those described on the previous pages.
- Offer a healthful snack (bagels, fruit, and water).
- Pass out information about the importance of regular physical activity and good nutrition. (See *The Competitive Edge* handout in Appendix 8.8.)
- Have a local sports personality lead a half-time stretch/physical activity break for the audience (see Chapter 4 for activity ideas).
- Have a half-time nutrition and physical activity trivia game.

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## 3. Support nutrition and physical activity at your meetings and programs

- Add a physical activity/stretch break to the agenda (see Chapter 4 for activity ideas).
- Serve healthful snacks and meals (see Chapter 3 for ideas).
- Lead the group in a nutrition activity (adapt one of the activities from Chapter 6).
- Set up a visual display or booth (see the previous pages).

## 5. Nutrition and Physical Activity Field Trips

### **Take a trip to a sit-down or fast-food restaurant**

During your visit, make a list of healthful menu choices and collect menus with nutrition information. Youth can also practice making healthful food choices and proper restaurant etiquette. Assemble a collection of menus from your visits.

### **Tour a health food store, supermarket, or ethnic food store**

Compare the difference in food availability, variety, quality, price, and nutritional value. Discuss smart shopping strategies such as using coupons and purchasing store brands and foods on sale. Take a tour of the produce department. Have someone talk to the youth about how to pick seasonal fruits and vegetables. Visit the canned goods aisle and discuss the alternatives to fresh produce (canned, dried, and frozen) that are available. Point out various strategies food manufacturers and stores use (packaging, placement in the store, displays) to attract young people to their products.

### **Visit a local health club or recreation center**

Learn about the facilities and opportunities for physical activity that are available for youth.

### **Visit a dialysis or cardiac clinic**

Show youth first hand how poor diet and physical inactivity can affect the body.

### **Get some physical activity**

- Expose youth to examples of enjoyable lifelong activities
- Go for a swim
- Play a game of basketball, golf, or tennis
- Take a hike
- Participate as a team in a walk-a-thon or race

## 6. Nutrition and Physical Activity Guest Speakers, Topics, and Contacts

Invite an expert from a local organization or business to speak on any of the following nutrition or physical activity topics or careers.

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### Registered Dietitian

- Relationship between disease, diet, and physical activity
- *MyPyramid Food Guidance System*
- Adolescent nutrition needs
- Choosing healthier meals and snacks
- Reading food labels
- Eating healthfully on a budget
- Eating healthfully while away at college
- Eating on the run
- Packing healthful lunches and snacks
- Dieting
- Link between nutrition and academic performance
- Nutrition information on the Internet
- Food fads and myths
- Sports nutrition; eating healthfully for maximum performance
- Vegetarian diets
- Careers in nutrition

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## Physician

- Link between diet, physical activity, and disease
- Obesity
- Heart disease
- Diabetes
- Cancer

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## Professional Chef

- Conduct a food demonstration or prepare a healthful recipe

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## Local Sports Star, Coach, or Fitness Trainer

- The importance of physical activity and a healthy diet
- Careers in the fitness industry
- Maintaining a physically active lifestyle while completing a full class load



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## Contacts for Potential Speakers

- State, county, and local health departments
- Universities that have physical education, kinesiology, or nutrition departments
- Hospitals and Health Maintenance Organizations that have outreach programs
- Hospitals that have dietetic internship programs

### **American Dietetic Association (ADA)**

Provides referrals to a Registered Dietitian in your area.

Phone: 1-800-366-1655

[www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)

### **American Cancer Society (ACS)**

Provides guest speakers for classrooms, parent groups, and health fairs. Check your phone book under “American Cancer Society” for your regional office.

[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

### **American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance**

Phone: 1-800-213-7193

[www.aahperd.org](http://www.aahperd.org)

### **American Heart Association (AHA)**

Contact your division or regional American Heart Association office in your phone book.

[www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)

### **President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports**

Phone: 202-690-9000

[www.fitness.gov](http://www.fitness.gov)

**Local/State Cooperative Extension Offices**

Offer a variety of services and are a source of nutrition education resources and programs. Phone numbers are usually listed in the telephone directory under county/city government. The national office is located in the:

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Washington, D.C.  
Phone: 202-720-2908  
[www.csrees.usda.gov](http://www.csrees.usda.gov)

**National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities**

National Institutes of Health  
6707 Democracy Blvd., Suite 800  
MSC-5465  
Bethesda, MD 20892  
Phone: 301-402-1366  
Fax: 301-480-4049  
[www.ncmhd.nih.gov](http://www.ncmhd.nih.gov)

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

Division of Adolescent and School Health, Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity  
4770 Buford Highway, N.E.  
Mailstop K33  
Atlanta, GA 30341-3724  
Nutrition and Physical Activity Information Line: 1-888-CDC-4NRG  
Phone: 1-800-311-3435  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

**YMCA**

Phone: 1-888-311-YMCA  
[www.ymca.net](http://www.ymca.net)

## 7. Calendar of Events for Food, Health, and Agriculture Activities

Food, health, and agriculture-related activities can be scheduled and acknowledged throughout the year as shown in the following calendar. Look at these and other events for ways to promote healthful eating and healthful living messages.

<p><b>January</b> National Oatmeal Month National Pizza Week National Soup Month</p>	<p><b>February</b> American Heart Month National Cherry Month National Children's Dental Health Month National Pancake Week Potato Lover's Month National Girls and Women in Sports Day</p>	<p><b>March</b> National Agriculture Week National Nutrition Month National Peanut Month National School Breakfast Week National Youth Sports Safety Month</p>	<p><b>April</b> Cancer Control Month Earth Day World Health Day</p>
<p><b>May</b> National Blood Pressure Month National Egg Month National Physical Fitness and Sports Month National Bike Month National Running and Fitness Week</p>	<p><b>June</b> National Dairy Month National Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Month National Tennis Month National Special Recreation Week</p>	<p><b>July</b> National Baked Beans Month National Ice Cream Month National Picnic Month National Recreation and Park Month</p>	<p><b>August</b> National Catfish Month National Water Quality Month</p>
<p><b>September</b> All American Breakfast Month National Chicken Month National Cholesterol Education Month National Food Service Employees Day National Rice Month National Food Safety Month Family Health and Fitness Days</p>	<p><b>October</b> Child Health Day National Apple Month National Pasta Month National Popcorn Month National School Lunch Week National Seafood Month National Walk a Child to School Week</p>	<p><b>November</b> Sandwich Day Split Pea Soup Week National Diabetes Month</p>	<p><b>December</b> National Handwashing Awareness Week</p>



# 2