



VITALS

A Weekly Safety Newsletter For Medical Transport Professionals

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How Sweet It Is-or Is It?



It is clear that all of us in Medical Transportation need to show up at work every day with our "A Game". Whether we're doing 911 responses or taking a nursing home resident to dialysis, we are entrusted with the health and welfare of a human being. We must be equipped to meet these responsibilities safely. Our minds and bodies need to be rested, properly fueled and maintained, and ready for whatever comes our way. The Health & Wellness programs that are promoted in the workplace need to be taken home with us and shared with our families. We exert these efforts for strangers. Don't our families deserve as much?

It is believed by some health care experts that today's 10 to 30 year olds are going to be the first generation of Americans not to outlive their parents. Why? The epidemic of obesity is creating an epidemic of Type II Diabetes Mellitus (T2DM) and increasing cancer risk. It is estimated that a quarter of American kids 6-13 years old are obese. Since 1963 the number of obese American children has tripled. What's different?

Today only about 38% of meals are home cooked. In fact, about a third of U.S. children eat fast food daily. French fries make up about a third of the vegetables eaten by teenagers. Only 1 in 5 children get the recommended five or more servings of fruit and vegetables daily. Add to this dietary mess the fact the Surgeon General reported in 1996 that between 1991 and 1995 enrollment in high school physical education classes was cut in half. In light of the current budget cuts in schools, do you think this is getting better?

Adolescents with T2DM are diagnosed in their early teens. The average age is 13! Over 80% have a history of T2DM in a first degree relative. They are obese and have physical evidence of insulin resistance. Most have other medical problems such as hypertension, elevated lipids, sleep apnea, fatty liver disease, and polycystic ovary syndrome. Is anybody surprised that there is a higher than normal incidence of psychiatric disorders among these kids?

Family considerations aside, the workforce of tomorrow will come from this population. Think you have staffing difficulties now? How many people with these illnesses could bring you an "A Game"?

There is apparently a blood sugar range in which the brain works the best. Some authors quantified the range as from 75 to 270 mg/dl (4-15 mmol/l for you purists). The deleterious effects of hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) on motor and cognitive functions are well known. A relationship between hyperglycemia (high blood sugar) and cognitive performance has been established. When the blood sugar was above the recommended range, subjects completed all cognitive performance tests more slowly and had an increased number of mental subtraction errors. In terms of reality, hyperglycemia impairs the ability to perform tasks such as balancing checkbooks, calculating drug dosages, and general school and work performance. Remember you don't need to be diabetic to become hyperglycemic. Want to super-size that soft drink?