Assessing the Home Environment

Pennington Biomedical Greaux Healthy

Use brief survey questions completed by the parent or child to learn about the family's health behaviors. For example, families may record what they eat on food diaries or by answering simple recall questions.

Some examples of questions include:

- What foods are eaten outside of the home?
- How many sugary drinks does the child drink?
- How many fruits and vegetables are provided to the child?
- Does the child eat snacks late at night or in front of screens?

Directing Questions

Direct questions to the child when possible to engage them in conversation. This will also help involve family members in the conversation.

Motivational Interviewing

Use information about the child's diet and physical activity as part of motivational interviewing to help the family identify realistic, achievable health goals tailored to their family. These questions may be integrated into the electronic health record and used as a starting point to refer the family to strategies and services that can help them reach their health behavior goals.

Physical Activity and Sleep

Ask about the family's physical activity and sleep. Children may want to use a wearable tracker or app to track their steps each day and set activity goals. Some activity wearables have gamified components that can be used for fun competitions among family members or peers.

Understanding Access

Remember that a family's choices are impacted by where they live, work, learn, and play. Many families face significant barriers to accessing healthy foods and safe physical activity opportunities. Inquiring about access to basic social services and social determinants of health like food security may help families who are experiencing socioeconomic challenges or are having difficulty achieving their health behavior goals.

Assess the Family

Assess the family's understanding of proper nutrition and the importance of physical activity. Active parents influence their children to be more active whereas children of inactive parents are likely to be more sedentary. Specific family eating practices such as where the food is eaten and how the food is offered should also be assessed. Whether or not the family eats together or in front of a screen and access to safe areas to play around the home are also important questions to ask.

For more information: www.greauxhealthy.org /greauxhealthyPB
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