



Making healthy food choices easier through color

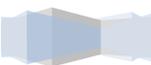
Several years ago Dr. Leonard Epstein, PhD. developed a family-based approach to childhood obesity called, *The Stoplight Diet for Children*. It is very similar to the game, *Red Light, Green Light* many might recall from childhood. The main goals of the program are to limit calories and encourage the consumption of nutrient rich foods as opposed to calorie dense foods.

All foods are categorized into one of three groups, Red, Yellow or Green. When making food choices, Green means “Go” Yellow means “Slow” and Red means “Whoa”. Green or “Go” foods should be the first choice when deciding what to eat. Green foods contain less than 2 grams of fat and are full of nutrients and/or fiber. Examples of Green foods are: most fruits, vegetables, whole wheat bread, fat free or 1% low-fat milk, grilled fish and skinless chicken or turkey. Yellow or “Slow” foods are our 2nd choice of food and they contain 2-5 grams of fat. Granola, ham, peanut butter, 100 percent fruit juice, sports drinks and white grains are in the slow group. Red or “Whoa” foods have very little nutritional value and are high in sugar, fat and calories. Red foods, which need to be eaten sparingly, include whole milk, hot dogs, French fries, butter, chocolates, cream cheese, sugary cereals and soft drinks.

The National Institutes of Health also joined the “Go, Slow and Whoa” bandwagon with their “We Can!” campaign (**W**ays to **E**nhance **C**hildren’s **A**ctivity & **N**utrition), designed to help children stay at a healthy weight. Research shows that parents and caregivers are the primary influence on this age group so this education program provides parents and caregivers with tools, fun activities, and more to help them encourage healthy eating, increased physical activity, and reduced time sitting in front of the screen (TV or computer) in their entire family.

As this game of healthy eating takes off in schools it is finally making a cross over to adult establishments. Across the nation independent eateries, grocery stores and worksites are adopting and adapting this childhood game to make healthier food choices a “no brainer” for their employees. The important link between what is supported in the workplace and what is taken home to create a healthy environment is being recognized. Most importantly there is a better understanding that no matter how much we teach our children once they step foot into their home and community they do not always have the opportunity to make the healthiest food choice.

At Fort HealthCare we are adopting this national movement by placing information in two of our eateries within the hospital on “Go, Slow, Whoa.” Starting small to help our culture adjust to the change, beverages in Java Junction and Partner’s Grill are labeled in the cooler with a sticker below the beverage that is green, yellow or red. Information guides have been placed as table tents on tables and next to cash registers. We are monitoring purchases of beverages and noting any changes. In addition,



there will be an employee wellness assessment sent out in July to find out if our efforts are being supported and recognized.

The important take away from this national campaign for both children and adults is to understand that extra calories cause weight gain, no matter where they come from! Our lifestyles now demand an easy and convenient way to make healthy food choices. Picking “Green Light” labeled foods helps you to automatically choose healthy foods and beverages that are low in calories and nutritious.

For assistance in creating a color coding system at your workplace, contact Sharon Rateike, corporate wellness program coordinator at (920) 568-5475 or Sharon.Rateike@forthc.com.

