

ALL ABOUT GROWING UP HEALTHY

Where have we been? Where are we going?

Fall, 2011

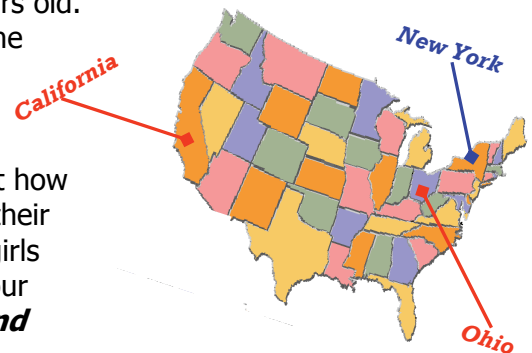


This special newsletter is for the GIRLS who are participating in Growing Up Healthy. We want to keep you informed about the study and let you know what we plan to do in the future.

WHAT IS GROWING UP HEALTHY AND WHY AM I IN IT?

You joined the Growing Up Healthy study when you were 6-8 years old. At that time you and your parent/guardian agreed to be part of the study. Now that you are older, we wanted to remind you why we are doing the study.

Growing Up Healthy is part of a ***national study*** that is looking at how girls develop and mature and how the environment may change their body size and time of puberty. Four hundred and sixteen (416) girls from New York City enrolled in the study. Another 823 girls of your same age in Ohio and California are also enrolled. ***That's a grand total of 1,239 girls!***



WHY AND HOW IS GROWING UP HEALTHY RESEARCH DONE?

Research is like a detective story. We ask a ***question***, we find the ***clues***, and try to connect the clues to answer the question! Clues are gathered for ***WHAT, HOW*** and ***WHY?***

WHY?

We think that the age and timing of puberty in girls may be related to health problems such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer in later life. We would like to learn more about why some girls start their periods earlier (or later) than others, and how diet, exercise and chemical exposures can affect girls' physical development so we can help prevent these health problems in the future.

HOW?

For clues about how girls develop we recorded information from all 416 girls in the New York study including height, weight, waist and hip size. You may remember that we sent you a growth report that showed your changes in height and weight for the first few years of the study.

We also gathered information from you about breast and hair changes and the time of your first monthly

period (menarche). We believe this can provide more clues as to how girls are developing today.

WHAT?

We asked your parent/guardian questions about the foods you eat and your usual activities. We asked you to keep track of how many steps you took in a week by asking you to wear a pedometer.

We asked about things you use like shampoo and other personal care products. We then tested the urine samples you provided for clues about your exposure to chemicals found in these products.

We also looked at certain substances in your body, genes and DNA, which are found in the saliva and/or blood samples you provided. DNA and genes are special substances we are born with which determine the unique characteristics of each person. We looked for some common individual differences in genes which we believe might affect the levels of certain chemicals in your body.

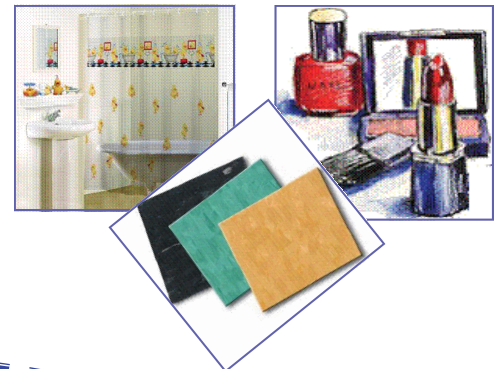
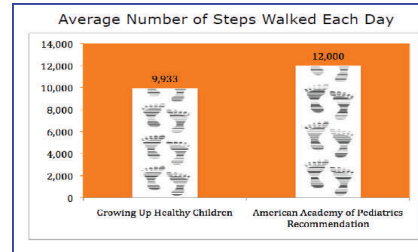
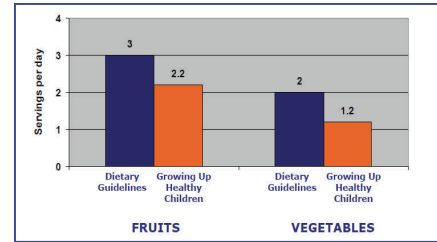




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We sent you newsletters that talked about the following:

- The eating habits of Growing Up Healthy girls compared to what the United States Department of Agriculture recommends that children your age should eat.
- The levels of physical activity of Growing Up Healthy girls compared to the levels of physical activity that are recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics for girls your age.
- Levels of exposure to one kind of chemical called phthalates in Growing Up Healthy girls compared to exposure levels in children of your same age across the United States. This chemical was measured in the first set of urine samples you provided.



WHAT'S NEXT?

During the next 4 years, you will continue to grow. We will be measuring the age when you grow the fastest and the age you stop growing which, for most girls, is about 18 years old. In addition, even if you have already started your periods, through the menstrual calendars, we hope to learn the age when your cycles become regular. The study will continue to look at how environment and chemical exposures affect the timing of these events.

**If you have any questions, please call
The Growing Up Healthy Study Line at
(212) 824-7127**

How are body size and age related to the first signs of breast development?

Girls that were older and had larger body size were likely to have more developed breasts than younger and smaller girls. At 7 years old, about 1 of every 10 White girls, 1 of every 4 Black girls and 1 of every 6 Hispanic girls had already entered puberty based on their stage of breast development.



Why are some girls getting their first period (menarche) at such a young age?

Your great great great grandmothers may have started menarche (the first monthly period) at 17-18 years of age. Now, the average age is 12-13. One possible reason for earlier menarche is much better nutrition over the centuries, which has also made people taller. There is some evidence that exposure to certain chemicals can change the timing of menarche (making it later or earlier). Researchers are looking at how being overweight or obese can lead to early menarche. Higher calorie diets may contribute to early menarche since they increase risk of obesity. Extreme exercise, such as intensive gymnastics, on the other hand seem to delay menarche.

Did you find any differences in chemical exposure among the three study locations?

We measured 19 chemicals in your urine. Some of the chemicals were higher in New York City girls than in the girls from Ohio and California. This included a chemical from mothballs and one from cigarette smoke. Phthalates, which are found in some soft plastics and personal care products such as shampoos and lotions, were found to be higher in New York City girls.



How can I identify the plastic containers that are safer?

Look for the recycling numbers on the plastic containers to make sure that you are using the safer plastics.

Do I have to change the shampoos and lotions that I currently use?

It may be difficult to change all the products you use. But, you should begin to read the labels on the items you are buying. If you can find unscented products, they probably have fewer chemicals in them.

