



Berrien is a *We Can!* County

Obesity is overtaking smoking as the No. 1 preventable cause of death in the US. The leading causes of death in our community are heart disease, cancer, stroke and diabetes – all of which can be prevented by reducing obesity and overweight.

We Can! (Ways to Enhance Children's Activity & Nutrition!), is a new program from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to address the growing obesity epidemic among youth ages 8–13. *We Can!* reaches parents and caregivers in home and community settings with educational materials and activities including a new six-lesson course for parents, a new parent Web site (<http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov>),

a parent handbook in English and Spanish, several youth programs, and community events and projects.

Obesity is a problem in Berrien County. One third of the population of Berrien is considered obese according to height and weight measurements, and another third are considered overweight. "Parents in Berrien now have new resources to



We Can! encourages children ages 8–13 to:

- Choose a variety of fruits and vegetables every day
- Enjoy small portions at home and at restaurants
- Decrease consumption of high-fat foods and energy-dense food low in nutrient value
- Substitute water or low-fat milk for sweetened beverages
- Engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity on most, preferably all, days of the week
- Reduce sedentary activity by limiting screen time to no more than two hours per day



help their families maintain a healthy weight," said Theresa Green, Director of Community Health Planning with the Berrien County Health Department. "With the materials that the *We Can!* program offers, we can help make a difference in the lives of our residents."

In May the Berrien County Commissioners voted to make Berrien the fourth *We Can!* county in the nation. Lakeland HealthCare in partnership with the Healthy Berrien Consortium will take the lead in implementing the program. Several activities are planned for *We Can!* in the upcoming year including youth programs, parent programs and community outreach events.

We Can! is based on an in-depth review of the leading science-based information on obesity prevention, and a scan of relevant materials from Federal and non-Federal agency programs. NIH has designed *We Can!* so that any local groups, parent groups, churches and others can implement these activities in their communities. The Health Department can provide program materials or help you organize classes or an event.

More information on *We Can!* is also available at the *We Can!* Web site:



<http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov> or call 1-866-35-WECAN.

Berrien County Health

Department:
Preventing Disease,
Prolonging Life and
Protecting the
Health of the
Community.



Building Family and Community

In September, the Berrien County Health Department will focus on topics that build family and community. Articles will include information on *We Can!* And America on the Move, Nurse Family Partnership, Substance Abuse Prevention, and general information about the Health Department. For more information about any of these topics, **please call the health department at 926-7121.**

Mark your calendars...

for Saturday, September 27th, from 9-11am for the Berrien County *We Can!* **Family Walk to Wellness!** Bring your family and join others as we walk, run, skip or jump along the trail. Walk as long as you wish and enjoy the many water stations and health fair that will be available as you exercise. The event will take place on the Lakeland Center for Out-patient Services Campus (at 3900 Hollywood Road, St. Joseph).

This event will mark the end of America on the Move Week, sponsored by the YMCA. America On the Move Week with the YMCA is a nationwide event to inspire people to incorporate healthy activities into their daily routines.

The message for America On the Move Week with the YMCA is to move more and eat healthfully by taking 2,000 more steps (about one mile) and eating only 100 fewer calories. Research from the America On the Move Foundation shows that these small changes have been shown to make a difference. For information about America on the Move go to: september.americaonthemove.org or call the health department.

For more information call the health department at 926-7121.

What is *We Can!* ?

"*We Can!* is designed to empower parents by providing them the tools they need to promote healthy eating, increase physical activity and reduce sedentary time within their families," said Dr. Elizabeth G. Nabel, Director of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) at NIH.

We Can! encourages parents and caregivers to:

- Increase the availability and of healthy foods in the home
- Enjoy small portions at home and at restaurants
- Limit the availability in the home of sweetened beverages, high-fat foods and foods that are low in nutrients
- Support and enable family to do physical activity
- Support and enable reduced screen time

Special thanks to Theresa Green for her help in writing this article.

The Berrien County Health Department has five locations to serve you:

Benton Harbor		Niles		Three Oaks
769 Pipestone	M-139 Office	School Based	1205 N. Front St.	21 N. Elm
P.O. Box 706	2106 S. M-139	870 Colfax Ave	684-2800	756-2008
926-7121	927-5623	925-4500		

Or visit us on the web at www.bchdmi.org

This page is sponsored by the Berrien County Health Department

