

# Parent Letter and Activities

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your child's health class is currently studying noncommunicable diseases—those that are not spread by contact. Specifically, we are studying the causes, symptoms, and treatments of allergies, arthritis, asthma, cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and others. Because the four leading causes of death in the United States are noncommunicable diseases, our study of them is especially important.

Some questions your teenager will answer as we study these topics are: *Why do some diseases seem to run in families? Can I do anything to prevent heart disease? What can I do to avoid getting cancer? What is asthma? Do only old people get arthritis?* and many others.

Throughout this chapter, our emphasis will be on understanding the facts of each disease and on following healthy lifestyle behaviors that help prevent or lessen the causes and effects of these diseases. Our approach to this serious topic is straightforward and positive.

To support and extend our classroom work, please set aside some time during the next few weeks to complete one or more of the following activities with your teenager:

- Initiate a discussion with your teen about any disease that runs in your family.
- Emphasize that many noncommunicable diseases develop over time as a result of a person's lifestyle choices. Explain that choices your child makes now could prevent the onset of disease in years to come.
- As a family, brainstorm ways you could change your lifestyle in order to help prevent diseases that are related to lifestyle behavior.
- Exercise with your child. Go for a walk or play a sport together. Emphasize how exercise is essential for staying healthy.

Please feel free to engage in any other activities you think will encourage your teenager to develop a greater understanding of noncommunicable diseases. Emphasize the benefits of a healthy lifestyle that includes a proper diet and plenty of exercise. Thank you for supporting our classroom work.

Sincerely,

Health Teacher