



Help Kids Eat and Exercise for Better Health

When you talk to your child about exercising, does he just look at you and continue to click the computer mouse? When was the last time your child willingly ate a vegetable or a piece of fruit?

Hoosiers are overweight. According to the Indiana State Department of Health, 35.6 percent of Hoosier adults are overweight and another 19.5% are obese. Overweight adults typically were overweight kids. According to the Surgeon General, overweight adolescents have a 70 percent chance of becoming overweight or obese adults.

There are many social and health consequences of our children being overweight. The most immediate consequence is social discrimination, as well as poor self-esteem and depression. The long-term consequences of obesity include diabetes, arthritis and other bone-related problems, high blood pressure, stroke, kidney disease, gallbladder disease, and heart disease. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that of the nation's overweight children, 61% have one or more cardiovascular disease factors; 27% have two or more. If your child is overweight now, is this the future you want for your child?

Among the many factors contributing to children being overweight are the following:

- **Limited physical activity for recreation and entertainment.** How much time do your children spend in front of a computer, television, or playing video games?

- **Eating too many foods with little nutritious value.** Families of the 21st century are accustomed to eating on the run, which means quick foods, quick meals, and little attention to nutrition content and the basic food groups.
- **Few adult role models who demonstrate and reinforce healthy habits and behaviors, including eating right and having a regular exercise regimen.** While our children are overweight, adults in our country also are overweight. Reports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicate that obesity among adults has increased by nearly 60% nationally.

Here are some things you can do to help your child develop and practice healthy lifestyles:

- Plan your family's meals so you purchase food at the grocery store and avoid eating fast foods. Read food labels to learn about the fat content of foods.
- Make certain everyone in your family eats three balanced meals a day – breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Keep healthy snacks always on hand, including fruit or yogurt.
- When you do have to eat in a hurry, look for alternatives to traditional fast food fare, such as wraps, soups, and salads.
- Set limits on television-watching and computer time. Set regular family time dedicated to some form of exercise activity for everyone.
- Be a role model to your child. Let them see you practicing healthy eating habits and exercising. Be concerned about what your child eats.

If you feel your child is overweight, let them know they are loved whatever their weight. But remember, doctors and health professionals are the best people to determine whether your child's weight is healthy.

For more information on nutrition for children of all ages, contact Riley Hospital's Community Education Department at 317-274-2964 or visit www.rileyforkids.org