

Fit for Life Kids: Begin Lifetime Health Today!

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According to the U.S. Surgeon General, ***“The prevalence of overweight adolescents 12-19 has nearly tripled in the past two decades.”*** America has an undeniable epidemic of obesity. Rapid increases of weight cannot be blamed on genetics—the causes are “lifestyle choices.” The simple truth is Americans choose to be less physically active and choose to eat large amounts of foods that are high in fat and high in calories. On children, kids are not to blame for their poor health—adults are to blame. If you love your kids and want to give them a fighting chance to be healthy for life—do something before it's too late! No more excuses. Get them moving and get them eating the right portion sizes of healthier foods with the tips below—NOW! ☺

Lead by example.

- Adults are the best role models for their children. If you want your child to develop healthy behaviors, you must show them how yourself. The “culture” in your home must support and value healthy lifestyles.

Kids need 60 minutes of “vigorous” activity per day.

- Hard vigorous play is the best way for kids to “exercise” and get fit. As they play hard, they’ll get aerobic, strength, and flexibility improvements as they jump, run, climb, push, pull, and do what normally healthy and active kids like to do. The 60 minutes activity total can be short bursts of 10-15 minutes throughout the day.

Make fitness fun & playful.

- Adults “workout” to get fit, but kids just want to play. So let them! Simple play at the park, throwing Frisbees, running around with family dog are all fun ways to let kids be active without forcing them into “adult” workouts.

Use “Fitness Toys” to increase interest & participation.

- Traditional sport and competitive activities are fine for some kids—but not all. For variety, try using “alternative” equipment like a BOSU balance trainer, stability ball, light dumbbells, exercise tubing, and safety cones for agility courses that can be used for fun activities. The new “novelty effect” will encourage participation and playfulness with fitness.

Emphasize participation—not competition—for overweight children.

- Never set up an overweight child for failure by creating environments where smaller faster kids are guaranteed to always be “first.” Create activity stations based on simple participation. For example, instead of running “a lap” just have them run around—anywhere! Give them 30 seconds with no set course so there is not a person in first or last place and everyone has their own pace while still moving.

Limit TV and video games to 2 hours per day.

- Recent studies have linked child obesity to excessive TV and sitting time. Give them “active” options for physical movement, and **be active with them** when possible.

Drink some water!

- Many kids go all day without drinking water! Water is healthier than soda, has NO calories, and has other benefits like aiding digestion and promoting weight loss.

Eat at least 5 servings of fruit & veggies per day.

- Eating at least “5-A-Day” of fruits and vegetables helps prevent certain cancers, assists digestion, and pumps the body full of healthy vitamins and minerals.

Limit high fat/high calorie foods.

- “One” fast food meal can have a day or more of total calories required for an active full sized adult—those extra calories lead to excessive weight especially in children.
- If you buy high fat and high calorie junk snacks for home kids will eat them. Don’t make it easy for them to make unhealthy choices; keep healthy snacks available that increase health instead of foods that decrease health and add to child obesity.

* Ron Jones (9.3.07)