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healthykids

Simple Solutions for Childhood Obesity

By Dr. Michael Smith, ND

Childhood obesity has more than tripled over the past 30 years and its effects are staggering. According to the CDC, obese children are more at risk for cardiovascular disease, bone and joint problems, sleep apnea, diabetes, several types of cancer and poor self-esteem.

Fortunately, there are simple solutions to address weight issues and teach healthy lifestyle habits that will carry on into adulthood.

Cut Out the Junk

The root of childhood obesity stems directly from the foods that kids aren't eating. Kids today are filling up on pizza, chicken nuggets, candy bars and artificially colored drinks and candies. These processed and genetically modified foods are full of fats and sugars with little to no nutrition. So instead of building stronger bones and healthy bodies, children are expanding their girth and slowing down – a scary trend that will only follow them into adulthood.

The solution is simple – whole, real and colorful fruits and vegetables. Slowly replace processed snack foods with healthier options like beans, nuts, fruits, and vegetables. Serve snacks and meals that are naturally colorful and thereby rich in nutrients. This simple change will greatly affect how your children feel.

Sweet Nothings

Sugary drinks are the main source of added sugar for children. Well over half of school age children have at least one can of soda per day. Each 12-oz serving of soda has the equivalent of 10 teaspoons of sugar, providing a lot of calories very quickly.

Increased amounts of sugary drinks like soda, energy drinks and fruitades are associated with increased blood pressure, blood glucose levels, waist circumference, and body mass index and decreased (HDL) or "good" cholesterol levels.

A recent study supports the idea that children who have a lower sugar load may improve short-term memory and attention span at school. So check labels and serve healthy beverages.

Make It Fun

Get creative with your children's diets and make the introduction of new foods fun by involving them. Make grocery shopping a game and challenge your

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children to help you shop for fruits and vegetables that are a variety of colors, shapes and sizes.

Create a family garden with a variety of fruits and vegetables and involve your children in the planting and nurturing of it. They will enjoy harvesting and eating the bounty they helped foster.

Involve your children in cooking. Have your child select a cookbook with kid-friendly, healthy recipes that you can prepare together.

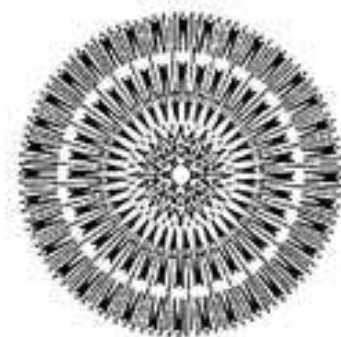
Make eating fun. Dips such as peanut butter, almond butter or hummus are a great way to get picky children to eat fruits and vegetables. A unique presentation of food also makes eating fun from smiley faces on a homemade pizza to fruit and vegetable skewers.

Get Moving

Children need physical activity – preferably around 60 minutes a day. Recent studies have found that children ages 8-18 spend three hours per day watching TV, videos, DVDs, and movies.

Take your kids for a bike ride or go for a hike as a family. Encourage them to join school sports or neighborhood teams, which will not only build teamwork and sportsmanship, but provide greater health. Limit the amount of time that your family watches TV or plays video games. If necessary, unplug the TV and instead use that time to get moving as a family.

Dr. Michael Smith is the founder of Carolinas Natural Health Center, a holistic health care center in Matthews, NC. Carolinas Natural Health Center offers a range of services including homeopathy, naturopathic medicine, massage therapy, weight loss, and skin care. For a complimentary consultation call 704-708-4404 or visit www.carolinasnatural-health.com.



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