

Children's Health

Parents Can Halt The Alarming Increase In Childhood Obesity

(NAPSA)—According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 15 percent or about 9 million American children ages 6 to 17 are overweight or obese. This excessive weight, particularly at a young age, puts them at increased risk for adult health problems earlier in life.

“Young people need to be active and learn to eat right,” said Dennis O’Neill, MD, FCAP, a pathologist in Manchester, Conn. “When it comes to healthy living, parents are their children’s most important role models. If children see their parents enjoying healthy foods and exercising, they are more likely to do so.”

Pathologists, physicians who treat patients through laboratory medicine, say the primary causes of obesity in children are overeating and inadequate exercise. Children’s attitudes toward exercise and eating are shaped early and can last a lifetime. Parents should encourage their children to enjoy a variety of foods, especially cereals, fruits, and vegetables, as well as low-fat dairy products and lean meats, and limit unhealthy fast food and soft drinks.

“Parents need to realize that how their child manages his or her weight now can have a profound affect on their future health,” said Dr. O’Neill. “A diagnosis of type II diabetes at a young age can mean a lifetime of complications.”

Although commonly thought of as “adult onset” diabetes, diagnoses of type II diabetes in children is increasing at a rapid rate. Diabetes puts children as young as 10 at a lifelong risk for heart disease, kidney failure, and blindness. In addition, children with type II diabetes must monitor

Keep Your Kids Healthy

1. Limit your children's access to unhealthy foods
2. Plan family outings that involve exercise
3. Limit your children's "couch potato" time in front of the TV or video games
4. Be a role model for healthy habits



their blood glucose levels for the rest of their lives.

If diabetes is suspected, a primary care doctor will order blood tests and from that test, pathologists will determine the level of glucose in the blood stream. However, since most people first learn they have diabetes through routine tests or through blood tests done for another condition, regular visits to a physician are important.

Eating a healthy diet is only part of the fight against obesity and its health complications. Turning off the television and video games and increasing physical activity is necessary to keep your children at a healthy weight. Almost half of children aged 8 to 16 years watch three to five hours of television a day. And it is the kids who watch the most television who have the highest rate of obesity.

“Encouraging your child to be active today can lead to good health habits when they are adults,” said Dr. O’Neill. “Take up family hobbies like hiking, bowling, swimming and biking that you can all enjoy together.”

And Dr. O’Neill says, parents who set good examples for eating and exercise with their children are not only helping youngsters today, but provide healthy lifestyle choices that will be passed on to future generations.