

September: National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month



As a child, you experience the world through the relationships with parents and other caregivers. They shape the development of children's physical, emotional, social, behavioral, and intellectual capacities, which ultimately affect their health as adults. As a result, promoting a healthy lifestyle can have a positive impact on the development skills that will help children reach their full potential.

A healthy body needs nutrients (like vitamins, minerals, proteins, carbohydrates) for growth, development, energy, and running all of our body systems. Those nutrients should come mainly from the food you eat. Just as cars need gasoline to run, your body needs food to keep it going. But not just any food. To be your healthiest, and to look and feel your best, you need to give your body the right kinds and amounts of fuel.

September is Childhood Obesity Awareness Month. Obesity now affects 17% of all children and adolescents in the United States - triple the rate from just one generation ago. Obese children are more likely to have the following health conditions:

- High blood pressure and high cholesterol, which are risk factors for cardiovascular disease (CVD).
- Increased risk of type 2 diabetes.
- Breathing problems, such as sleep apnea, and asthma.
- Joint problems and musculoskeletal discomfort
- Fatty liver disease, gallstones, and gastro-esophageal reflux (i.e., heartburn)
- Greater risk of social and psychological problems, such as discrimination and poor self-esteem, which can continue into adulthood

Parents and Caregivers can use this month to raise awareness about the childhood obesity and show people how they can take action toward a solution – both at home and in the community. Let's commit to leading efforts to end the widespread of childhood obesity by:

- Encouraging families to make small changes, like keeping fresh fruit within their children's reach or going on family walks after dinner
- Motivate teachers and administrators to make schools healthier by providing quality nutrition and making sure physical activity is a part of every student's day
- Ask doctors and nurses to be leaders in their communities by supporting programs to prevent childhood obesity

Providing safe, stable, and nurturing relationships and environments for all children requires changing attitudes, behaviors, norms, and policies. It is worth noting the biggest obstacle to improving health throughout a community is often not the shortage of funds or the absence of “programs” but rather the lack of commitment to do something about it. This means it is critical to build commitment as a foundation for any meaningful public health initiative, including the steps to prevent childhood obesity.

Raise awareness and commit to support a healthier lifestyle for children and families. It is as simple as following these suggestions for healthier eating and physical activity: 5-2-1-Almost None prescription for health:



5: stands for five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day. Fruits and vegetables are packed with disease-fighting nutrients and give you energy, naturally.

- Serve at least one fruit or vegetable at every meal and snack. Try all the different colors.
- Dip veggies in low fat dressing. Tuck them in whole wheat pitas. Toss some on your pizza.
- Try and try again. It may take children several tastings (10 or more) before they begin to enjoy certain foods.

2: stands for no more than two hours per day in front of a screen (TV, video games, and recreational computer time). A number of studies show a correlation between watching television and obesity.

- Be a role model — limit your own screen time. Play, take a walk, or cook with your kids instead.
- Keep the TV in a central location and out of your child’s bedroom.
- Turn off the TV during dinner and take time to talk about your day.

1: means at least one hour of physical activity per day. Physical activity, especially when it gets the heart pumping faster, is vital to maintaining a healthy weight and overall good health. Kids who are raised in active families tend to stay active as adults.

- Plan one physical activity for the family each weekend. Let each child take turns choosing the activity.
- There are lots of ways to be active — walking, dancing, gardening, and raking leaves can all get your heart pumping.
- 10 minutes here, 10 minutes there — and before you know it, you've been moving your body for an hour.

Almost none refers to almost no sugary beverages — no more than two servings per week of soft drinks, sports drinks, and fruit drinks that are not 100% fruit juice. Over the last few decades, soda consumption has doubled for girls, tripled for boys.

- Choose water. Add a lemon or lime wedge or a splash of juice for flavor.
- Drink water, milk, and juice yourself. Your children learn by watching you.
- Avoid bringing sodas and sports drinks home. If it's there, the kids will drink it.

