

Childhood Obesity

The modern day lifestyle has resulted in increased childhood obesity. When children are seriously over weight, this can lead to over weight teenagers and adults. As more children exercise less, follow a sedentary routine and become addicted to junk food, long-term obesity will predispose them to illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer. These illnesses have a connection to an over consumption of food. Each illness can be just as deadly as malnutrition.

How does it begin?

Our lifestyle could be stated as our life pattern that we pass onto our children. Today, there are an abundance of fast food establishments and more people can afford to eat out. There is no one out there telling parents that this can negatively affect their child's health – certainly not the fast-food companies. Our genetic makeup also plays a strong role in the tendency to gain weight. Could your child be taking in more calories than he or she expends each day? Are the wrong kinds of food being consumed on a regular basis? Is time set aside each day for moderate exercise? Even though we may not be able to change the genes that we inherit, we do have a choice in the nutrition and activities that could affect our weight and health.

Food is so important in our daily lives that we need to understand how it affects our bodies and our children's growing bodies. Many working moms and dads may run to the corner fast food chain frequently for daily meals. I overheard one mom ask her child what she wanted to eat for dinner. The child said, "I want to eat a burger and a toy." This spoke volumes to advertisement by the food industry. We are now being conditioned to super size our burgers, fries and soft drinks on a routine basis. This could be avoided by disciplined meal planning and organization. It is not always easy with our busy schedules but the benefits are priceless to have fresh, low fat meals.

What can the parent do?

Parents can do a lot to reverse the affects of obesity in their children. Parents can evaluate their child's activity level and eating habits. Could your child be spending most of his/her day sitting – watching TV or playing video games? Does your child seldom walk more than 100 yards? Does your child actively run around and play between 20 and 30 minutes daily? Daily exercise, if only for thirty minutes, can be very beneficial. Even exercising three times a week can help your child to avoid serious problems in the future. Exercise burns calories, and the predominant question for parents should be, "Each day is my child burning up more calories than he or she is taking in?" Talk to your Pediatrician, Nutritionist and Physical Therapist for directions and the best medical advice, the right meal plan and exercise routine. Encourage your child to get outside to play, walk or cycle. Make this a family affair that is enjoyable and fun.