



A Healthy Awareness

Why not resolve this year to help your kids try to get a lid on their expanding waist (waste?) lines? You'll not only be doing them a big favor, you'll also ensure they enjoy a long and healthy lifespan with your blessings. How bad is it? By all accounts, it is really quite bad. Research indicates that more children are overweight and obese than in the past. In 1981, about 14% of girls and 18% of boys were obese. By 1991, 24% of girls and 26% of boys were considered overweight or obese. Because our kids have become so much bigger and less active, they are now experiencing obesity-related health problems. For example, Type II diabetes, a disease that was once known as adult-onset diabetes because it was rarely seen in anyone under the age of 40, is now being diagnosed in kids as young as 9 or 10.

But obesity is related to a lot more problems than just diabetes. One recent study concluded that obesity is linked to 41 separate adverse health outcomes. This includes well-known and obvious problems such as an excess risk of cardiovascular disease and osteoarthritis of the knees and hips, to less well-known obesity-related conditions such as a higher risk of depression and cancer.

That's some of the bad news. The good news is that the solution to this impending crisis lies, to a large extent, in our own hands. Although overweight and obese parents are more likely to have kids who are overweight partly on the basis of a genetic predisposition to put on extra pounds, to a much larger extent kids who are overweight are simply copying the lifestyle of overweight parents. The reality is that this can be controlled. Recognizing the problem is the first step.

Unfortunately, according to a recent British survey, a lot of parents are still ignoring their kids' weight problems. Several hundred parents, parents of all weights – fat, obese, and

My Health, My Life, My Resolution

normal weight – did not see their fat kids as having a weight problem. For example, even when a child was obese, half the dads and a third of the moms still thought their child looked just “about right”. Even worse, three-quarters of the parents of the “big” kids were not “concerned” about the child’s weight.

Why this refusal to see the problem? A few possibilities spring to mind. It could be that there are just so many “big” and obese kids around these days that most people no longer recognize a normal weight for a child. It could also be the simple “hide our heads in the sand and it may pass” syndrome, some parents just assuming that their children will eventually outgrow their “baby” fat. So why not start THIS year, to break the cycle?

Research shows that the longer a child remains obese, the more likely s/he will become an obese adult. According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation, weight gain in children is due primarily to lack of physical activity. To reverse this trend, children should become more active and eat properly. Active, healthy children have a better chance of becoming active, healthy adults.

Helping children

- Encourage your children to get moving.
- Limit the amount of television they can watch and the time they can spend playing video and computer games.
- Organize activity full family outings.
- Encourage your children to participate in any sports they enjoy.
- Encourage your children to develop healthy eating habits and enjoy healthy foods.
- Teach them about Healthy Eating, and tell them how important balance, moderation and variety are in their diet.
- Explain how having smaller meals and healthier snacks more often is the best way to eat.
- Set a good example yourself - be active and develop healthy eating habits.