

## Healthy Living

### Childhood and Teenage Obesity

Obesity is the condition where the amount of body fat adversely affects a person's health and well being. Children often first feel the effects of obesity emotionally and psychologically. The stigma of being different than other children or not being included with those their age because of their appearance can cause emotional stress and depression. This can form a vicious circle that can also leads to more over eating and more weight gain. More than the emotional and psychological effects the physical effects can cause life threatening diseases such as diabetes, respiratory issues, liver or kidney disease, high blood pressure and heart problems. It is also thought that children who are obese grow up to be overweight adults.

Helping children and teens learn how to eat and live healthy lives is a great start to fighting obesity. Replacing some of the highly sweetened drinks and snacks that they consume each day with healthier alternatives can greatly lower the calories that they consume each day. This doesn't mean not to allow anything sweet to be eaten. This would just cause rebellion. But moderate how many sweetened items are eaten vs. fruits and nuts, or soda pops drank vs. water or juice. By giving them an chance to choose between certain healthier food and drink items it teaches good decision making when it come to eating. If you can discuss why one item is healthier than and what benefits it will give them all the better. I.E. "Why is raw broccoli and low fat dip better to munch on than potato chips and dip? Broccoli has lots of iron and will make you strong like Superman, potato chips are fried in grease and will give you pimples."

Leading an active lifestyle is one of the most effective ways in maintaining a healthy weight. The best thing is to turn off the TV, get up off the couch or out from behind the computer and play. Children should have at least 60 minutes of vigorous play a day. This includes dancing, running, kicking a ball, etc. All these type activities get you up and moving, building muscle and increasing oxygen intake, increasing heart rate and burning calories.

(Portions of Information courtesy of Wikipedia, suite 101.com)