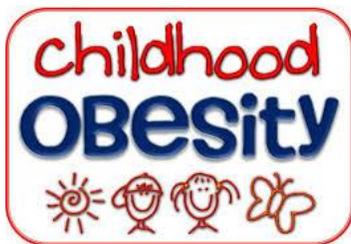


Parish Health News



Childhood obesity has become an epidemic. This is not a cosmetic issue; this is a life-threatening issue. According to the CDC's 2012 statistics more than one third of American children and adolescents were overweight or obese. This epidemic is all a result of too many calories being consumed in relationship to the amount of calories expended. This is affected by factors such as genetics, behavior and environmental influences.

Children who experience obesity in childhood are set up for many immediate added risk factors including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, bone and joint problems, sleep apnea and social problems. Long term health effects must also be considered. Obese children are more likely to be obese as adults. Again, their risk for health problems is greatly increased, such as heart disease, stroke and many types of cancer that are associated with obesity.

So, the news is bad. Now what?

Parents, grandparents, teachers, child care providers can all play a part in promoting an active lifestyle for children. Go for a walk with a child in your life. Take them to the swimming pool. Turn off the cartoons this Summer and turn on the sprinkler. Be creative and have fun with kids, fun that requires some action.

Additionally, nutrition must be considered. This doesn't always mean eating less. It may simply mean eating better. There is a helpful program available on the internet called "Go, Slow and Whoa". If you just type in those words you will find several sites featuring this program.



"Go, Slow and Whoa" breaks foods into three groups. The **GO** group includes things you can pretty much eat whenever you want as they are lowest in fat and sugar, low in calories and nutrient dense. These include whole grains, fruits and vegetables, lean proteins that include not only lean meats but beans and nuts as well.

SLOW foods are a bit higher in fat, added sugar and calories and they are ok to eat sometimes, but not always. This list includes fruit juices and pancakes with syrup.

WHOA foods are highest in fat and added sugars. They have a lot of calories per bite and should only be consumed in small portions for special occasions. This category includes candy, cake and sweetened soft drinks.

You can see the "Go Slow and Whoa" chart at www.nhibi.nih.gov/health/educational/wecan/eat-right/choosing-foods.htm . If you would rather, just ask me and I would be happy to print this out for you.

The thing about children is, well, they are children. We adults need to set good examples and help them make proper choices. It is up to us to lead the way.

Sue Struck, RN