

## Children and Weight: A Family Concern

The number of obese children is on the rise in the United States. National statistics indicate today's children are heavier than children in the 1970s, and that extra weight gain has a negative effect on health. Incidence of Type II diabetes, commonly seen in adults, is becoming a widespread condition in overweight children. How can parents tackle the complex problem of childhood obesity?

As part of the solution, it is important to develop strong family habits that will help the obese child. Look at how active your child and your family is on a daily basis. Does your family focus on active play? Family behavior is typically modeled by children, so be sure your day includes active recreational time—perhaps walks or bicycle rides, dancing to favorite radio tunes, or a basketball game.

The family's regard for food also is important. Check how food and activity are included in your family's routine. Does food usually take center stage or is it often included in other activities, such as car rides, television watching, shopping, or homework? While none of these is necessarily wrong, many times we override our hungry and full "signals," and end up overeating. Overeating combined with less activity equals weight gain for anyone—old or young.

If you believe your child is overweight, check with your child's physician. It's a step in a healthy direction!

*Sandy Procter*

## Making the Transition from Work to Home

When you come home from work do you feel like there is an enormous amount of work to be done and no time to do it? If so, you are not alone. The transition between your work life and your home life is a difficult one. This time of day is often called the whirlwind hour.

During this transition time, it may seem that your body is in the right place, but your mind is not. You may be thinking about things that happened at work that day, chores that need to be done or other events that you need to attend. It seems that there are so many family needs to meet and no time!

These times of transition are difficult, but there are some ways to help ease the stress.

- The more time you have to make the transition, the better.
- Set your clocks ahead. This will help you stay a few minutes ahead of schedule.
- Try to manage your time and responsibilities at work so your tasks are completed and you can leave work when you plan to.
- Schedule catch-up time into your day. This will allow you to deal with unexpected things as they come up.
- Separate your home and work lives. Don't take personal issues to work and don't bring work problems home.
- Use commuting time to think about the next activity. You could set goals for the day on your way to work or review the evening schedule before arriving home.
- Commuting time could also be used to relax and clear your mind of work and home demands. Listen to relaxing music and disregard the problems of the day.
- Remember to work as a team with your family. Take turns making dinner or doing other household chores.
- Changing from work attire to comfortable clothes when you arrive home will help you change your focus.

*Megan Mayo and Katey Walker*

## PARENTS CORNER

### Violence and Children

Early childhood is the best time to prevent violent behavior. Children that experience a personal, caring relationship with an adult before age six are less likely to be violent in teen years.

Violence is based on powerlessness, ignorance, and the feeling that there is no other way to deal with the anger. When a child feels smart and powerful—a feeling nurtured in babies—then he or she can often find alternative ways to deal with anger.

When a parent spends time with a child, such as going to the zoo or park, playing games, or listening to music, the child feels important. The child often behaves appropriately to avoid disappointing the nurturing parent.

The younger the child, the more important it is that they receive nurturing care, which should continue throughout the child's life.

*Charles A. Smith*

### Controlling Dust Mites

- Wash all blankets and bedding in hot water, weekly.
- Store books, magazines, and toys in enclosed bins or plastic bags.
- Replace upholstered furniture with furniture that can be wiped clean.
- Replace heavy drapery with washable drapery, miniblinds, shades, or lightweight curtains.
- Use a dehumidifier to keep humidity below 50 percent.
- Avoid wall-to-wall carpeting. Use hardwood or vinyl floor coverings or rugs that can be washed in hot water.
- Don't allow children to lay their faces or blankets directly on carpet.
- Choose washable stuffed toys. Wash them in hot water and dry thoroughly.

*Marilyn Bode*

### Kitchen Time Can Be Family Time

As children master new skills, they often are eager to help in the kitchen. Their interest can provide enjoyable family time while teaching nutrition and health.

Talk about where food comes from (milk from a cow that lives on a farm), its nutritional value (builds strong bones and teeth) and teach food safety. Remind children to wash their hands with soap and water before and after handling food (count to 20 while lathering). Prepare food on a clean surface using clean utensils, and start teaching cleanup at an early age.

Younger children need to be supervised with hot pans or a stove top; electrical appliances like bread machines or dishwashers; knives or other kitchen utensils. Try these easy projects with your children:

- Make personal pizzas. Use a can of refrigerated biscuits. Roll biscuits to flatten slightly; spread with pizza sauce and your choice of toppings, such as diced ham, crushed pineapple, and cheese.
- Make a spider pretzel. For each, set out two round crackers, two teaspoons of creamy peanut butter, eight stick pretzels, and two raisins. Make a sandwich with the crackers and peanut butter; insert pretzels as legs; and secure eyes (raisins) with a small dab of peanut butter.
- Plan an indoor picnic. Ask children to help fill a basket with summertime foods, spread a tablecloth or blanket on the floor, and have a picnic.
- Turn dessert into a party. Make a sundae bar with ice cream, frozen yogurt, or sherbet and a selection of toppings like fudge sauce, cookie crumbs, or sprinkles.

Encouraging children to help in the kitchen can offer a lot of pluses, including the fact they usually are more willing to eat foods they help prepare.

*Kathy Walsten*

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