

Childhood Obesity

The obesity rate in children has tripled over the past 30 years and as a result, it is believed this will be the first generation that will not outlive their parents!

At the national level, Michelle Obama has been instrumental in getting the “Let’s Move” campaign going with partners such as United States Departments of Education, Agriculture, Health and Human Services and others to help stop this trend. The focus is to help families develop a more active lifestyle and make healthy food choices.

Locally, Cooperative Extension has partnered with the Pasco County Health Department and District School Board to bring the Family Nutrition Program (FNP) to Pasco County. FNP offers nutrition education in the areas of nutrition, food preparation, food safety, stretching food dollars and food security. Program assistants visit schools across the county teaching about MyPyramid and the need to be more active. They encourage children and parents to eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. They discuss the importance of milk/calcium and water/hydration. They also review portion control, and nutrient-dense foods versus empty calories.

Here is a link to a very short U-Tube video by the New York Health Department that shows what drinking too much soda can do...

<http://www.youtube.com/drinkingsugar>

Studies have shown that children who learn about proper nutrition and the reason behind it are less likely to be overweight as adults.

Now parents, here is what YOU can do – starting with being a role model. Remember, the healthy eating habits we teach our children early can last them a lifetime!

Seven Super Suggestions:

1. Decrease screen time – that includes time spent not only sitting in front of TV but also

computers, video games, etc. For children over age 2 that means no more than 2 hours and children under age 2 should not be exposed to television at all.

2. Encourage daily physical activity – that should be one hour or more, daily. Better yet, try to find an activity that you and your child can do together.
3. Encourage active transportation – walk, run, ride a bike/scooter, roller skate, etc. between homes, to schools, after school activities.
4. Learn about food labels and stay informed with science-based information (avoid junk science).
5. Use key messages like these, daily:
 - Drink water instead of soda or juice with added sugar
 - Avoid foods that contain a lot of added sugars or fats
 - Eat more fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins
 - Chose low-fat /1% or fat-free/skim dairy products
6. Teach children about MyPyramid (nutrition, eating balanced meals, portion control, etc.)
7. Make the most of mealtime – let children help plan, shop for groceries, prepare meals and set the table. All ages can do something to help. Not only will it help build self-esteem, they will be more willing to eat the healthy foods prepared.

For more information from FDA about “Nutrition Basics Help Fight Childhood Obesity”:

<http://www.fda.gov/downloads/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/UCM230987.pdf>

And a UF/IFAS publication on “Raising Healthy Children: The Importance of Family Meals:”

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/files/FY/FY119500.pdf>

And one more on “Healthy Snacks for Children:

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/files/FY/FY89300.pdf>