

Fitness and Learning

by Diane Trautman

Much has been reported lately about adult obesity, but did you know that seventeen percent of adolescents between two and 19 are overweight? This represents a quadrupling of obesity rates over one generation.

So why am I discussing diet in a column normally devoted to education? Children who eat a variety of nutritious foods are more likely to be successful in school, while those on a poor diet who fail to consume key nutrients tend to have difficulty in school.

Various genetic, cultural, and environmental factors can lead to overweight, but there are steps that parents can take to prevent obesity. Here are some recommendations from the Office of the Surgeon General.

Help kids stay active. Whether through natural or structured play periods, 60 minutes of moderate physical activity each day, whether consecutive or broken into shorter periods, is the goal.

Limit TV and other screen time to less than two hours per day. Keep televisions and computers out of the bedroom and off during meal time, and provide alternatives that will get the kids moving.

Encourage healthy eating habits. Serve healthy meals that provide the recommended balance of fruits, vegetables, and whole grain foods. Rid your pantry of foods full of empty calories.

Make sure your child eats a healthy breakfast every day. Starting the day with an egg and fruit or whole-grain cereal and low-fat milk, will help your child maintain his energy and focus throughout the morning and maintain a healthy weight.

Sit at the table and eat together as a family. Children tend to eat more fruits and vegetables when they share healthy meals with their families.

Know how much food to serve your child. Learn more about healthy portion sizes and teach your children to eat only appropriate servings. Learning portion control will help them learn self-control when presented with outsized meals.

Promote healthy choices. Make sure your children get sufficient sleep each night. Encourage them to help with food planning, shopping, and preparation.

As parents, we can ensure that our children have the best chance for success in school and in life by making good nutrition and regular exercise priorities for them and for us.

For more information, contact Diane at StudyPros at 661-296-9206 or visit www.studypros.com.