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**NUTRITION SEGMENT OCTOBER 15, 2007: Overcome Childhood Overweight**

Every week I see more and more children in my office regarding childhood overweight. Childhood overweight is based on a child's weight matched with their height to give their body mass index. A child is overweight if their body mass index is greater than the 95<sup>th</sup>% on the growth chart. A child is at-risk-for-overweight if the body mass index is greater than the 85<sup>th</sup>%. The national rate of childhood overweight is at 17-18%. The real acceleration began in the 1980s-1990s.

**STATISTICS:**

- Overweight among children aged 2 to 5 more than doubled in the past 20 years.
- Overweight among children aged 6-11 and adolescents aged 12 to 19 nearly tripled.
- Probability of being obese into adulthood is 20% at age 4 and 80% as an adolescent

**STATEMENTS:**

**Stacy's five questions during parent/children consultations for childhood overweight:**

- 1) What beverages does your child drink and in what amounts?
- 2) How much screen time (computer, television, video games) does your child get per day?
- 3) Is there a television in the child's bedroom?
- 4) What is dinner table time like?
- 5) How much physical activity does your child get per day, outside of physical education and recess?

Help instill healthy eating and physical activity in your child as early as age two. Use the ideas below to help overcome childhood overweight.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

**BE THEIR HEALTHY HERO:**

- If you want to raise a healthy eater, you must be one yourself. In this world of unhealthy messages, act as their healthy hero by promoting and talking about the importance of making healthy choices.

**COMPLETE A CUPBOARD MAKEOVER:**

- Eliminate soda pop, Kool-Aid and fake juice drinks (ones that do not state 100% juice). Children can drink low-fat plain milk with meals and water and low-calorie drinks in between meals.
- Create a nourishing nest in your kitchen by filling the house with bowls of fresh fruit, cut-up vegetables in the crisper, whole grain crackers, yogurt, string cheese and high-fiber cereal.
- You don't have to eliminate every unhealthy item because total restriction backfires. Set a limit in your household regarding unhealthy items.

**OFFER A SNACK, NOT A MINI MEAL:**

- If the after-school snack is a big challenge, explain to your kids what a snack is. A snack is a few foods that will help keep your tummy satisfied until dinner. A snack is not a mini meal.

- Create a snack draw for the kids and let them know they can have two choices. One choice is a fruit or vegetable and the other a whole grain or protein source. Then have them play before homework or dinner.

**MAKE IT FUN:**

- Involve the kids in planning and prep like choosing a new vegetable or adding an ingredient to the meal. The more involved they are, the more they will branch out and try new healthy foods instead of relying on mac & cheese or chicken nuggets.
- Keep table time light and positive, pressure-free with no distractions such as the television.

**FOLLOW THE 30 MINUTE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY RULE and WEEKEND GAME:**

- Use the rule of trying a new activity for at least 30 minutes before giving up.
- Play the weekend game by setting limits for time spent indoors. Designate the weekend as family day to hike, walk, discover and be out of the house.
- Physical activity recommendations for children are 60 minutes a day. This can be broken up into 4, 15-minute bouts.
- When children come home from school, their brains are tired but their bodies are not. Create opportunities for being active like jump rope, bike riding, trampoline, Frisbee.

*For more questions, contact Stacy Beeson @ 381-2403 or beesons@slrnc.org.*