Safe kids • Healthy kids • Happy kids

Dealing with Childhood Obesity

Parents: Take Control — Teach Control

Childhood obesity concerns parents and kids. Choosing the right approach improves success. Fad diets do not help. Programs that focus on food alone are not the best method either. Experts tell us to take the focus off the weight loss. Instead, begin lifestyle changes that improve the mind, body and spirit.

Lifestyle changes begin with parents. You have the most control over your child's diet, activities and self-image. Life-long habits are established between ages 6 – 12.

Take control now. Learn to make healthy lifestyle changes. Then, teach and model them for your child.

Big lifestyle changes start with small steps. Involve all family members in your plan.

- **Set goals that everyone can achieve.** For example, say "no" to soda during the week. Allow each child 1 soda on Saturday and Sunday. Start with 20 minutes of exercise a day. Work up to 60 minutes daily.
- **Make your lifestyle changes fun.** Kids want to have fun with their parents. Find exercise activities that you can do as a family.
- **Forgive setbacks.** Look at failures. Make changes that might help you find success. Start again with a *positive attitude*.
- **Stick with your plan.** Do not give up. After a few weeks, your changes will start to become a part of your routine.
- **Be a family cheerleader.** Say positive words. Give praise for good attempts. Celebrate successes.
- **Give your child control she can handle.** Offer two healthy snacks. Let her choose one. Have her plan her packed lunches to take to school. Involve her in shopping for food.
- **Keep unhealthy food out of your home.** Do not put yourself in the role of always saying "no" to food your child wants.
- **Make learning about healthy living a family activity.** Attend local classes. Search the Internet. Find sites for kids and adults that teach healthy living. One site for both you and your child is www.letsmove.org.

Families are unique. What works for one family, might not work for another. With you as the coach, however, your family will find the healthy lifestyle that works for them.

Brought to you by Parent Help Line and St. John's Children's Hospital