

September is National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month



Brought to you by Pike County Health Department, Home Health and Hospice

Since 1980, childhood obesity rates have more than doubled. Childhood obesity puts kids at risk for health problems that were once seen only in adults, like type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease. Until recently, young children and teens almost never got type 2 diabetes, which is why it used to be called adult-onset diabetes. Now, about one-third of American youth are overweight or obese, a problem closely related to the increase in kids with type 2 diabetes, some as young as 10 years old. The good news is that childhood obesity can be prevented. In honor of National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month, the Pike County Health Department encourages your family to make healthy changes together. Parents can do a lot to help their kids prevent obesity. Set a new normal as a family – healthy changes become habits more easily when everyone does them together. Here are some tips to get started:

MEALTIME MAKEOVER

- Drink more water and fewer sugary drinks.
- Eat more fruits and vegetables – the original fast foods.
- Make favorite foods healthier, using less sugar and salt. Applesauce can even be substituted for oil in some recipes.
- Get kids involved in making healthier meals.
- Eat slowly – it takes at least 20 minutes to start feeling full.
- Eat at the dinner table only, not in front of the TV or computer.
- Shop for food together.
- Shop on a full stomach so you're not tempted to buy unhealthy food.
- Teach your kids to read food labels to understand which foods are healthiest.
- Have meals together as a family as often as you can and keep mealtime upbeat and stress free.
- Don't insist kids clean their plates.
- Don't put serving dishes on the table.
- Serve small portions; let kids ask for seconds.
- Reward kids with praise instead of food.

GETTING PHYSICAL

- Aim for your child to get 60 minutes of physical activity a day, in several 10 or 15 minute sessions or all at once.
- Start slow and build up.
- Keep it positive – focus on progress.
- Take parent and kid fitness classes together.
- Make physical activity more fun; try new things.
- Ask kids what activities they like best – everyone is different.
- Have a “fit kit” available – a jump rope, hand weights, resistance bands.
- Limit screen time (TV, computer, video games) to 2 hours a day.
- Plan active outings, like hiking or biking.
- Take walks together.
- Move more in and out of the house – vacuuming, raking leaves, gardening.
- Turn chores into games, like racing to see how fast you can clean the house.

Young kids and teens are still growing, so if they're overweight the goal is to slow down weight gain while allowing normal growth and development. Don't put them on a weight loss diet without talking to their doctor. Taking small steps as a family can help you and your child stay at a healthy weight. If you have any questions or concerns about your child's weight you may call the Health Department at 573.324.2111 to speak with our Diabetes Educator or Nutritionist.



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