

Child Health Notes

Promoting early identification and partnerships between families, primary health care providers & the community.

Distributed by the Lewis County Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) and Parent to Parent. **Contributors:** Washington Department of Health and the University of Washington Children with Special Health Care Needs.

OVERWEIGHT IN SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

“Overweight” is defined as BMI for age >95th percentile in children over 2 years of age



We’ve all heard about the epidemic of “obesity” in children. Consequences of being overweight during childhood include lifelong obesity, early onset of type 2 diabetes, poor self esteem or psychological problems, orthopedic problems from wear and tear on joints, high blood pressure/high cholesterol. Children with special needs may be more likely to become overweight than other children if their disability causes them to be inactive. It may be difficult for them to move because of poor muscle tone, poor motor coordination or lack of motivation. **Healthy eating and physical activity are the keys to prevention of overweight!**

HEALTHY EATING — TIPS FOR PARENTS

Practice good eating habits yourself – children learn by imitating YOU!

New Food Pyramid
(www.mypyramid.gov)

“Make healthy-eating a family affair” (Newsweek April 25, 2005)

“Drink water and stop the pop!”

INSTEAD OF...	TRY TO...
Offering food at any time	Offer 3 nutritious meals and 2 healthy snacks at consistent times each day--children do well with structure/routine.
Sending your child to school without breakfast	Offer breakfast everyday—breakfast is especially important for children.
Offering cookies, cake, chips, ice cream, candy, pastries, fried food	Offer healthy snacks: fruit, whole grain breads/crackers, cereal; low-fat yogurt/pudding. After age 4: raw carrots, cheese chunks, nuts.
Giving dessert only if a child finishes dinner	Have dessert as part of the meal, but in reasonable portions
Forcing your child to finish	Offer age-appropriate portions and allow your child to decide how much he will eat of what is served.
Providing soda pop/soft drinks	Offer milk, water, 100% juice on occasion (whole milk till age 2, then low-fat or nonfat milk after age 2).
Offering food any place: at the TV or computer, in the car or bedroom	Eat together at the table-- this helps to separate eating from other activities. (Children eat more safely sitting, not walking/lying.)
Using food as a reward	Offer verbal praise or special time with you as a reward.
Using food as a comfort	Comfort with attention, listening, hugs, stuffed animals.
Using food as a distraction	Find other ways to fill children’s time.
Letting bad habits get set — eating habits are learned early!	Start young! Baby’s first meals can be at the family table. Follow your baby’s cues so that he learns to eat when hungry, stop when full.



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PHYSICAL ACTIVITY — TIPS FOR PARENTS

Be a role model to your children...if you are active, your child will be, too!

"Turn off the TV, turn on the muscles!"

Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005 recommends that children and adolescents engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity on most, preferably all, days of the week.

INSTEAD OF...	TRY TO...
Letting your child sit at the computer or TV for long periods	Limit total screen time (TV, computer, video games) to no more than 2 hours per day

Letting your child sit still for long periods	<p>Make sure your child has the opportunity to move. She doesn't have to become an Olympic athlete—she just needs free time to play and move.</p> <p>Change your child's position every 30-60 minutes if she can't move herself.</p> <p>Avoid restraining your child in seats or adaptive devices for more than 30 minutes at a time.</p>
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INSTEAD OF...	TRY TO...
Being a family of "couch potatoes"	<p>Take a walk together everyday or go to the park.</p> <p>Play with a ball (roll it, throw it, chase it, kick it).</p> <p>Encourage creative or unstructured play at home.</p> <p>Try to find simple chores that your child can do or help with.</p> <p>Dance to music! If your child can't stand up, do arm motions to music.</p> <p>Ask your child's teacher or therapist how to adapt an activity or play equipment.</p> <p>Look for swimming programs or community center recreation programs.</p>
Accepting that your child doesn't get PE in school.	<p>Ask that your child get physical education (PE) in school.</p> <p>Include physical activity goals in your child's IEP.</p>

SPECIAL NEEDS INFORMATION AND RESOURCES:

LOCAL:	Lewis County Parent to Parent Newsletter	www.reliableenterprise.org/newsletters.html rbryan@reliableenterprises.org
	Lewis County Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC)	Contact Rayna Austin at 360-748-4359
REGIONAL:	Children's Obesity Action Team (COAT)	206-987-2626
	Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center, Seattle	http://www.childrensobesityaction.org/
	Order a free Healthy Eating/Activity Packet from the Children's Resource Line	206-987-2500 or 1-866-987-2500, option 4
	Ski for All Foundation (physical activities for disabled in WA, not just skiing)	www.skiforall.org
	Special Olympics WA (for children from age 8 with intellectual disabilities)	www.sowa.org
INTERNET:	The Kid's Activity Pyramid (tear-off sheet tablets, posters or magnets) from Park Nicollet Health Innovations	www.parknicollet.com/healthinnovations Keyword search: pyramid
	August 2003 AAP Policy Statement on Prevention of Pediatric Overweight and Obesity	http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;112/2/424
	CDC Growth Charts for calculating BMI	www.cdc.gov/growthcharts
	Nutrition Focus, 12, 2: Physical Activity & Exercise for Children with Special Health Care Needs	Order from: www.chdd.washington.edu/ucedd/CO/Nutrifocus.pdf
	Northwest Bulletin, Winter 2004 issue, "Child and Adolescent Obesity"	www.depts.washington.edu/nwbfch/current.html