



# Self-Image, Health Affect Obese Children

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), childhood obesity has more than tripled in the past 30 years.

This alarming trend means 20% of children 6-11 years and 18% of children 12-19 years old are obese.

Obesity not only affects a child's self-image and conception of self-worth it means children are at risk for very adult-type diseases such as cardiovascular disease, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, pre-diabetes and bone and joint problems. This also translates into a higher risk for many types of cancers in adulthood.

The CDC says prevention is the best way to avoid the risks of childhood obesity and encourages parents to instill the importance of healthy lifestyle habits, such as healthy eating and physical activity into children at a young age.

Local registered dietician Rachel Pinos, who works for Avera Sacred Heart Hospital and Hy-Vee, says the earlier you start teaching healthy eating habits the better.

"Kids do know how much food is enough," she said. "They

know when they are full, so having clean plate rules is a bad principle."

Rather than making a child finish all the food they are given, parents should give a smaller amount with more emphasis on fruits and vegetables.


"Just having fruits and vegetables available helps kids eat more," she said. "Always have fruits and vegetables cut up and ready to be eaten and just don't have the junk food in the house."

Examples Pinos gave of healthy snacks include cut up fruit and vegetables, whole grain crackers, finger foods like grapes or apples, and vegetables dipped in hummus instead of ranch dressing or a piece of string cheese.

If your kids turn their noses at vegetables, Pinos recommends encouraging them to try new things.


"Tastebuds change seven times in one year," she said. "It usually takes trying something new about five times before you really decide if you like it or not."

Candy, chips, cookies and similar foods should be eaten only in



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"Dying is one of the events in life certain to occur, yet one we are not likely to plan for." We spend more time getting ready for two weeks away from work than we do for our last time on Earth" (*Time Magazine*)



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