

## **WEIGHING IN ON CHILDREN'S HEALTH**

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**When you think of diseases and illnesses such as diabetes, high blood pressure, cancer, strokes, heart attacks and high cholesterol you probably think of the elderly population. But, you should start thinking of these diseases and illnesses when you have children. According to the ISDH SPAN Survey 36% of 4th graders surveyed are in the “at risk for overweight” category and 19 - 20% are in the “overweight” category. Although I cannot make a 100% guarantee that if you keep you teach your children healthy eating patterns and keep your child's weight under control that your child will never develop these diseases, their risks will be greatly decreased. Wouldn't the gift of good health be a gift you would like to share with your children? Children learn behaviors and patterns early on in life and the longer bad habits are practiced the harder they are to break. Lack of physical activity and increased sedentary activity become habits that are not easily broken. “If you don't take control of your lifestyle, one day your lifestyle will take control of you!” That is sadly all too true, as the above diseases and illnesses can take control over a person, so you need to ingrain in your children from an early age to take control of our lifestyles. Hopefully, after reading this article, people will begin to find ways to regain control of their children's lifestyles and increase their child's health! Attempts at weight loss to correct the problem once a child becomes obese are expensive, frustrating and usually unsuccessful. Preventing obesity is the logical course of action.**

**Lets briefly take a look at things a person can do to live a healthier life. Most of the following suggestions to help control obesity are from comments made by Dr. William H. Dietz, whom is the director of the Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:**

- #1. Breast-feed your infants.**
- #2. Reduce television viewing in children and adolescents. According to the Kaiser Report children who spend the most time with the media are most likely to be overweight. This is not just due to inactivity, but exposure to food advertising affects children's choices and requests for products in the grocery stores. The typical child sees 40,000 ads per year, the majority of ads targeted to children are for candy, cereal, soda and fast food. Children get a 1/3 of their calories from fast-food, therefore parents need to ask for nutrition information when deciding what your child should order.**
- #3. Increase physical activity in children and adolescents. Encourage physical education classes and walk-to-school programs. Encourage your children to be involved in sports, offered through the school system and through your communities Park & Recreation Department.**
- #4. Reduce your children's consumption of soft drinks. Sugar sweetened beverages can replace milk as a beverage choice and put children and teens at risk for osteoporosis. There is a very small window of opportunity to build bone mass that will last a lifetime. Once the teen years are past, bones increase very little in mass and start to lose calcium.**
- #5. Reduce portion size at meals. The USDA also states that what you are given as a**

serving size in a restaurant, is most generally actually two servings.

- #6. Increase fruit and vegetable consumption.**
- #7. Speak to your child about what they will eat while at school. Some lunch periods start as early as 10:30 a.m. and may be as short as 20 minutes. This makes it harder for your child to choose some healthy items that would take more time to eat. Early lunches can also leave your child hungry in the afternoon and promote snacking, once your child arrives home. A la carte items available at lunchtime are seldom the most nutritious choices.**
- #8. Above all else, be a good role model for your children. Children learn more by observation of role models than from educational attempts.**