

# Starting Out Healthy



SUBSTITUTING SOFT DRINKS • DIABETES RISK • MEAL MAKEOVERS

ISSUE 2, 2006



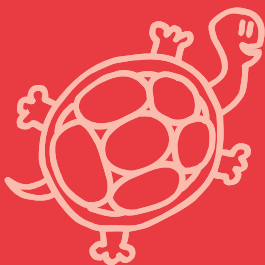
Dear Parents,

This issue of *Starting Out Healthy* focuses on weight management for kids. Why be concerned about overweight children?

- At least 70 percent of overweight children become overweight adults.
- They are at higher risk for heart disease, high blood pressure and other health problems as they age.
- Overweight children are developing type 2 diabetes, a disease that was once found only among adults, in record numbers.
- Children who are overweight can suffer from low self-esteem and teasing from their peers.

Helping your child learn how to make healthy lifestyle choices is one of the most important things you can do for him or her. Hopefully, the stories in this issue will help you meet these goals.

Sincerely,  
**Michael D. Aubin**  
Administrator



## Tip the Scales in Your Child's Favor

Experts call for action as America's kids bulk up, risking their health



**S**ure, the kids are carrying a few extra pounds — OK, maybe more than a few — but how big a deal could that be?

"We may see the first generation that will be less healthy and have a shorter life expectancy than their parents," U.S. Surgeon General Richard H. Carmona, M.D., told a Senate committee not long ago.

Obesity is catching up with tobacco as America's leading preventable killer, and it's a growing epidemic among children. Hospital weight clinics are treating preteens and teens who weigh as much as 400 pounds. Over the past 20 years, the proportion of overweight children doubled among 6- to 11-year-olds and tripled among adolescents 12 to 19. One in seven kids — more than 9 million children —

is overweight, says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). And their younger siblings aren't far behind. Ten percent of 2- to 5-year-olds weigh too much.

"We called the SARS outbreak an epidemic, and it affected 500 people," says William Dietz, M.D., director of the CDC's Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity. "This affects millions of children and adults, more people than HIV-AIDS does." Excess childhood weight is placing "an unprecedented burden" on children's health, the American Academy of Pediatrics says. It's triggering a host of dangerous health problems once seen only in adults.

About 10 years ago, for instance, doctors began noticing that overweight children were developing type 2 diabetes — once called adult-onset diabetes — earlier than ever before. Those children will also develop serious and even life-threatening complications from diabetes at much younger ages.

Being overweight isn't a phase most kids outgrow, either. Overweight adolescents have a 70 percent chance of becoming overweight adults.

"The good news is that there is still time to reverse this dangerous trend in our children's lives," Dr. Carmona says. But to do that, we need to understand why so many children weigh too much.

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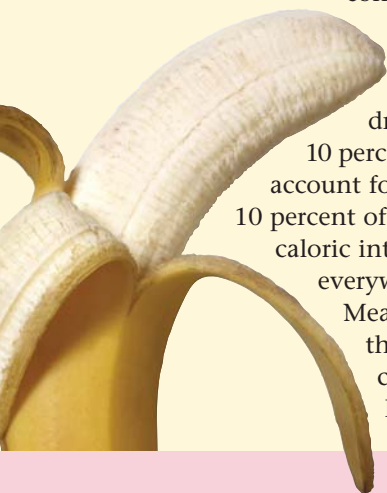


**Tip the scales** *continued from page 1*

Genes play a role for some children, but that's not new. However, the world kids live in is new in many ways. Among the factors:

- More sedentary lifestyles focused on television and video games
- Less physical education in schools
- Eating more meals outside the home, especially fast food
- Larger portions
- Too much fat and sugar

"More than 40 percent of an average family's food budget is spent on food consumed outside the home," Dr. Dietz says. "Soft drinks and 10 percent juice drinks account for more than 10 percent of adolescents' caloric intake. Food is everywhere. Meanwhile, less than a third of children who live within one



mile of their schools walk there." The average child spends more than five hours a day using TV, video games, computers and the Internet, the Kaiser Family Foundation says.

Sometimes, kids learn such behavior from adults. Many overweight parents don't feel anything is wrong when their children become heavy.

Other parents worry more about different things. In a one Ohio survey, for instance, parents listed sexual activity, alcohol consumption and cigarette smoking ahead of weight problems when asked about their top health-related concerns for their children. And still other parents don't know how to solve the problem. In Mississippi, the fattest state, doctors see fatalism among the young — the sense that, since kids' parents and grandparents are overweight and have chronic weight-related conditions, they're likewise cursed.

Nonsense, says Scott Nelson, M.D., a family physician and lifelong resident of Cleveland, Miss. "We need to have a



concerted effort to change not only the culture but the perception that obesity is an unstoppable disease. It is preventable. There are things you can do. And it's

## Take a Hard Line Against Soft Drinks

It's tough to make moderation work, so switch to milk, water and juice with no added sugar



Children often trade milk cartons for soda bottles when they hit the preteen years.

Those kids also tend to eat fewer fruits and vegetables, get less calcium and take in more calories. Since one in seven U.S. youths weighs too much, that alarms health professionals.

Soft drinks can't take all the blame for the weight crisis. But drinking less soda is one clear way to reduce calories.

"The issue of calories in liquids is an important one in combating obesity in children," says Cathy Nonas, R.D., author of *Outwit Your Weight*, who works with obese and diabetic patients in New York City. Although your child's diet won't be ruined if he drinks soda in modest amounts, it can be hard to stick to that goal. Children often gulp down a 20-ounce bottle, equal to 2½ servings.

"I think it's very hard to drink something like a soft drink in moderation," says Ms. Nonas. Instead, she suggests parents stop serving soda. "It's easier to cut out the whole thing for children than modify something that's so pervasive, and in large portions."

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**"The issue of calories in liquids is an important one in combating obesity in children."**

**—Cathy Nonas, R.D.  
author of *Outwit Your Weight***

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Nutritious substitutes are close at hand. Start with milk, says Theresa Nicklas, Dr.P.H., professor at the Children's Nutrition Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. ❖



a lot easier to do it when you're a child than waiting until you are much older. It's important to form good habits early." ❖

## [ health bits ]



### New Steps May Help Block SIDS

Putting babies to sleep on their backs has caused a sharp drop in sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Yet doctors still blame SIDS for more U.S. infant deaths than any other cause. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has revised its SIDS advice to deal with some new issues. The AAP:



- No longer thinks it's OK to put babies to sleep on their sides. Every caregiver should put a baby to sleep face up for each sleep period.
- Doesn't recommend bed sharing during sleep. You can bring infants into your bed to nurse or comfort them, but put them back in their cribs or bassinets (perhaps in your bedroom) when you want to go back to sleep.
- Suggests you use pacifiers at nap time and bedtime through the first year of life. Research shows a link between pacifier use and reduced SIDS risk.

The AAP also urges parents to use a firm sleep surface, keep soft objects and loose bedding out of cribs, and not smoke during pregnancy or around the baby.

### Make the Food Pyramid a Blast for Kids

Do you and your kids need help sorting out the government's new food pyramid? Check out "MyPyramid for Kids" at [www.mypyramid.gov/kids](http://www.mypyramid.gov/kids) for a kid-friendly version. "This is a fun approach to addressing the very serious problem of childhood obesity," says U.S. Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns. The site offers tips for parents, lesson plans for teachers and an interactive game for kids. In the game, called MyPyramid Blast Off, a rocket needs fuel to take off. Students have to pick a healthy set of foods and physical activities to fuel their rockets.

### More Boys and Girls Join Sports

The number of boys and girls in high school sports rose for the 16th straight year in 2004-05, according to a survey by the National Federation of State High School Associations. Nearly 53 percent of students — more than 7 million — take part in sports. Some key survey results:



- Girls' involvement, 2.9 million, set a record. The boys' total, 4.1 million, was the highest in 27 years.
- Basketball was the girls' top sport, followed by outdoor track and field, volleyball, fast-pitch softball and soccer.
- Football was the boys' leading sport, followed by basketball, outdoor track and field, baseball and soccer.
- Track and field gained the most girls last year. Among boys, football drew the most new players.

### Fried Foods Help Fuel Weight Gain

Children who eat lots of fried food are more likely to weigh too much and have poor diets, a Harvard study found. Researchers studied the eating habits of nearly 17,000 children ages 9 to 14. When their fried-food intake at restaurants rose in the course of a year, they gained more weight than you'd expect from normal growth. They also took in more calories and had less healthy diets. And overall, children's fried-food intake rose during the three-year study. "The children more than doubled their consumption," says study author Elsie Taveras, M.D., of Harvard Medical School. American Dietetic Association spokeswoman Sue Moores, R.D., says the study shows why families should eat at home. Few of us own a deep-fat fryer, she notes.

### Pour It On

- Give children three cups of fat-free or low-fat milk or milk products a day. Serving it cold makes it more inviting, Dr. Nicklas says.
- Offer water in a fun bottle.
- Steer teens toward diet sodas when soft drinks are on the menu. "If a child is going out and everyone else is getting a soft drink, sugar-free is an OK alternative," Ms. Nonas says. But preteens should not drink much diet soda full of artificial sweetener.
- Give a child one serving of 100 percent fruit juice each day if you wish, says Dr. Nicklas. Avoid fruit drinks and iced tea with added sweeteners. Dilute super-sweet drinks with water.

## Kids Are Heroes

As more than 100 kids and their families passed under the black and purple balloon arch, they entered a fantasyland featuring a magician, a celebrity sports figure and enchanting scenery for the Ninth Annual St. Joseph's Children's Hospital's "Kids Are Heroes" event in December.

"Kids Are Heroes began nine years ago as a way to celebrate the special contributions children make to our community," explains Administrator Michael Aubin. "It is our way of saying 'Thank you' to all of the kids in our community who show acts of courage, heroism and selflessness every day." ❖



Rick Peckham, play-by-play announcer for the Tampa Bay Lightning, served as the master of ceremonies.



Nolan Pratt, who plays defense for the Tampa Bay Lightning, served as the spokesperson.

### The 2005 Winners Are:

#### Ages 5-8

- First Place – Carolyn Yerger
- Second Place – Kayvanessia Brown
- Third Place – Julie Warkentien

#### Ages 9-12

- First Place – Samantha Cardwell
- Second Place – Austin Collier
- Third Place – Jared Smith

#### Ages 13-18

- First Place – Evelyn Gates
- Second Place – DaLacea Wooten
- Third Place – Jessica Woolbright



Administrator Michael Aubin (back row, left) and Tampa Bay Lightning player Nolan Pratt (back row, right) pose with the "Kids Are Heroes" winners.

# Golfers Tee Up for Annual Children's Golf Classic



Golfers are invited to tee up for the Annual Children's Golf Classic at Walden Lake Golf and Country Club in Plant City, on April 28, 2006.

Individual players may register for \$125 per person. The foursome fee is \$500. For \$600, the foursome can be a hole sponsor. The registration deadline is April 15, and space is limited to 288 players. All participants will be included in many activities, including lunch; access to the practice range; hole-in-one, closest to pin, longest drive and putting contests; poolside steak dinner provided by Outback Steakhouse; and door prizes.

Proceeds from the Children's Golf Classic support a wide variety of children's services in Plant City, including South Florida Baptist Hospital's pediatric health programs and screenings.

For more information or to register for the Children's Golf Classic, please contact Jack Vasconcellos at (813) 757-1286. ❖

# Children's Diabetes and Nutrition Center

St. Joseph's Children's Hospital makes it easy for you and your child to get the essential information you need to manage diabetes. Our classes help you and your child understand the basics of diabetes, insulin, medications, symptoms of high and low blood sugar, complications of diabetes and more.

Individual appointments are also available for education about types 1 and 2 diabetes and insulin pump education. **For more information or to schedule a class, call (813) 870-4899, Ext. 4. ❖**

# Baseball Greats Help Patients



Children's Hospital patient Samuel Gomez and his mother received a visit from Tampa Bay Devil Rays' outfielder Rocco Baldelli, mascot Raymond, and pitcher Jason Hammel. The Devil Rays' caravan visited with pediatric patients and their families as part of a goodwill tour around town to promote the upcoming season.



Two-time baseball All-Star Tino Martinez organized a group of kids for a Yuletide hayride to raise money for the Children's Heart Center Capital Campaign. The carolers raised \$565 for the fund.

# Why Weight?

## Unique program makes weight management fun

Weight loss isn't just about dieting. It also involves regular exercise, portion control, making healthy food decisions, eating in moderation and enhancing self-esteem. Why Weight?, our unique weight management program for kids ages 8 to 11 and 12 to 15, addresses all these aspects of healthy eating while making it fun and interesting for kids. Along with one parent or guardian per child, participants learn how to make choices that lead to a healthy lifestyle for the whole family.

When your child enrolls in Why Weight?, he or she will be part of a small, supportive group of kids with similar experiences. There will be healthy doses of fun, upbeat exercise and a friendly environment. The atmosphere will be interactive and noncompetitive. The kids can enjoy:

- Fun, interactive food and nutrition education
- Supervised physical activity
- Family coaching

Why Weight? is staffed by registered dietitians, certified health educators



and exercise specialists. The class meets two hours a week for six weeks. Each class focuses on nutrition, self-esteem coaching and physical activity.

Parents learn, too. Why Weight? makes it easy to create an environment that helps your children — and your whole family — stay healthy. You'll get information on:

- Making healthy food choices
- Exercises that can be done at home
- Improving your child's self-esteem

The next Why Weight? class runs from May 17 to June 21. For more information on how Why Weight? can improve your child's health for life, call (813) 870-4808. ❖



## Diabetes Tops the List of Health Risks

Children who weigh too much face a broad array of health problems, with type 2 diabetes leading the list

Closely linked to obesity, type 2 diabetes was once so rare among children that it was called adult-onset diabetes. But University of Florida doctors, like colleagues nationwide, are seeing “more 12- and 13-year-olds with type 2 diabetes than you can imagine,” says Janet Silverstein, M.D., chief of the University’s Division of Pediatric Endocrinology and a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics Executive Committee on Endocrinology.

Doctors estimate that 70 percent of overweight kids will grow up to be overweight adults. Once they’ve been too heavy for too many years, experts say, they’re at risk for diseases that doctors usually see in people in their 60s, 70s and 80s. “We’ll be treating them when they’re in their mid-30s,” says Francine R. Kaufman, M.D., former president of the American Diabetes Association. “Their diabetes will lead to so many problems.”

The average age of kids being treated in obesity clinics is about 12. “When these kids grow up and into their most productive years, many of them will be on disability from their diabetes and the many diseases that accompany diabetes,” says obesity researcher Richard L. Atkinson, M.D., president of the American Obesity Association.

But diabetes is just one of many health problems tied to obesity. “We had an 18-year-old girl with a stroke,” says Dr. Silverstein, whose Florida program is swamped with children. “It’s like this across the country.”

Obese kids also “have the quality of life, in many cases, of a chemotherapy patient,” she adds.

“This is a huge public health problem and it’s going to get worse,” says Dr. Silverstein. “The trend is still going up.” ❖

### Childhood Ailments Linked With Obesity

- Diabetes
- High cholesterol and other blood fats
- High blood pressure
- Gallbladder disease
- Polycystic ovaries
- Kidney trouble
- Vision disturbances
- Orthopedic difficulties
- Sleep apnea
- Psychological problems
- Social problems



## The Moms’ Guide to Meal Makeovers

Make changes gradually — and sell them to your kids

After a long day at work, getting dinner on the table can be a challenge. You may serve fast food, takeout meals or convenience foods — even though you’d rather serve more healthful foods that cost less.

“Your goal isn’t to try to take your family’s diet from a C-minus to an A-plus in a week,” says Liz Weiss, R.D., coauthor of *The Moms’ Guide to Meal Makeovers: Improving the Way Your Family Eats, One Meal at a Time*. “A more reasonable goal is to slowly improve a ‘not so good’ diet to a ‘not perfect, but better’ diet over the course of a month or so.” Here’s how:

# Get Your Kids to Log Off

## “Screen time” cuts into physical pastimes

TV and video games have robbed children of outside play for years. But now most U.S. homes have a personal computer, too, and about a third of kids ages 8 to 18 have one in their rooms. That has health experts casting a wary eye on PCs as well.

The problem is not just that going online can expose youngsters to predators or cause them to waste hours in chat rooms. It's also that rising “screen time” can cost kids the exercise they need to keep fit.

“Activity levels are waning, due to changes in [school] curricula, computer technology and community resources,” says Carl Foster, Ph.D., president of the American College of Sports Medicine. “As a result, our kids are getting fatter and may be the first generation not to have a longer life expectancy than their parents.”

Children and teens should get at least 60 minutes a day of physical activity, according to the 2005 dietary guidelines from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Human Services. How can you help? A lot of doctors say you should take TVs and PCs out of kids' rooms and limit screen time to two hours a day. They also say you should back more exercise. Go for a walk with your kids a few nights a week after supper, for instance. Shut off the Saturday cartoons and go inline skating or visit the zoo instead.

“While your children may complain in the short term, they will be healthier and better developed people for having a little less electronic input,” says Dr. Foster, a professor of sports science at the University of Wisconsin–LaCrosse.

“The key is to create something else for them to do outside without being

overbearing about it or orchestrating the play. You may need to band together with other parents and organize an after-school program to provide a safe venue. But kids, being kids, are plenty smart enough to think up fun things to do.” ❖

### To Learn More

- “We Can!” (National Institutes of Health): <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov>
- PC-Turnoff Organization: [www.pcturnoff.org](http://www.pcturnoff.org)
- American College of Sports Medicine: [www.acsm.org](http://www.acsm.org)
- National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity: [www.ncppa.org](http://www.ncppa.org)
- The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports: [www.fitness.gov](http://www.fitness.gov)

■ **Take small steps each week.** These are just a few:

- **Week one:** Add one extra serving of fruit each day. Example: Top your child's favorite cereal with sliced strawberries or bananas.
- **Week two:** Add one extra vegetable serving each day. Example: Add a shredded carrot to tuna salad.
- **Week three:** Add one healthy beverage each day. Example: Pack 100 percent fruit juice or 1 percent low-fat milk instead of sodas in lunches.
- **Week four:** Include one healthy snack each day. Example: Offer a midmorning snack of dried fruit and nuts.
- **Week five:** Serve one extra high-fiber grain food each day. Example: Use 100 percent whole-wheat bread instead of white bread for sandwiches.

■ **Market good nutrition to your kids.** “Give some thought to how you can make healthful foods more appealing

to your children,” says Ms. Weiss. Instead of stressing carrots' benefits, say, “These baby carrots are so delicious and sweet, you should try some.” Then pop one into your mouth.

- **Set food rules.** You're the boss, so make a few (not too many) rules on what your family eats. For example: Drink milk instead of soft drinks with meals. And no candy before dinner.
- **Streamline your time in the kitchen.** It's OK to use convenience foods sometimes, but choose the most healthful ones by reading labels and choosing those with the least fat, salt and sugar. Organize your pantry and refrigerator so you can find things fast.
- **Eat together as a family.** “Studies have shown that meals eaten as a family at home improve children's nutrition, strengthen family ties, enhance communication, foster

tradition and boost self-esteem,” says Ms. Weiss.

- **Start the day with breakfast.** That curbs snacking later. Trade sugary cereals for whole-grain products. Serve carrot and fruit juice blends instead of plain orange juice. ❖

### To Learn More

For more information, go online and visit [www.mealmakeovermoms.com](http://www.mealmakeovermoms.com).



# Children's Hospitals Lead Abuse Treatment and Prevention Efforts

Most parents don't want to hurt their child intentionally. But the stress of an infant who won't stop crying or the daily trials of caring for a child with special needs can overwhelm even the most loving mother or father. Whether you're struggling to build positive discipline skills or have seen another parent or caretaker abuse a child but don't know what to do, your local children's hospital can help.

## To Learn More

For more on children's hospital efforts to prevent and treat abuse and neglect, visit [www.childrenshospitals.net](http://www.childrenshospitals.net) and select "Child Advocacy."

For more on positive parenting, contact your local children's hospital.

Nearly 3 million cases of suspected abuse and neglect are reported in the U.S. each year. Children's hospitals are the undisputed leaders in providing medical care to abused and neglected children. They also teach how to cope with the frustration and anger every parent feels at times. Children's hospitals provide classes, fact sheets and more to guide parents through child rearing, as well as support groups for parents struggling with the same frustration.

Worried that a child you know or see in a public place is being maltreated? Children's hospitals can help connect you to a community resource where you can anonymously report your concerns.

Some parents worry that if their child is injured by accident, not through abuse, they will be suspected of abuse at a hospital. Children's



hospitals are working on a seamless, timely and effective system of abuse response that helps protect innocent parents and provides medical care and emotional healing to the most vulnerable children.

Working with children's hospital leaders, pediatricians and allied groups, NACHRI developed *Defining the Children's Hospital Role in Child Maltreatment*, a guide to establishing, developing and enhancing child abuse services in children's hospitals. These guidelines help offer the highest level of quality care possible to abused and neglected children. ❖



## NACHRI

National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions  
[www.childrenshospitals.net](http://www.childrenshospitals.net)

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For physician referrals, more information on Children's Hospital or to remain on this publication's mailing list, please call (813) 870-4747.

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