



## Start Now Fight Childhood Obesity

Did you know that this generation of American children might be the first to have a shorter life span than their parents? Childhood obesity appears to be a factor in this alarming new fact.

Billions of dollars are spent on weight loss programs, books, and diets in this country. Trying to lose weight, eat better and exercise more is a common desire for most Americans and one that seems very difficult to achieve long term. But the fact remains that many Americans, including children, are overweight and their health is being directly impacted as a result. In fact an alarming 25 million children ages 2-9 in our country are overweight or at risk to becoming overweight.

The health risks of this condition are an increased risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, and some types of cancer.

We must commit ourselves to begin taking steps to improve the overall health and fitness of our children.

### Let's GET STARTED:

**Commit to self-discipline.** Children look at the adults in their lives as role models. What we do is more important than what we say. Children need to see the adults they love and respect making healthy life choices if they are to learn to do the same. Mentally commit to:

**Set a good example.** Eat with the children in a relaxed environment, make healthy food choices, exercise. Serve as a good role model encouraging the development of life long habits of good healthy eating and physical activity.

We all falter at times and if that happens:

**Don't give up.** Show children that if you didn't meet your goal that day you just need to get back on track! Commit once again to:

**Making good food choices and developing healthy eating lifestyles.** Offer snacks that have a fruit or vegetable choice, increase your use of whole grains and low-fat dairy choices, decrease your use of processed foods. Allow children to regulate how much they eat, recognizing when they are full. Children need to eat every 2-3 hours and you should encourage:

**Moderation not restriction.** It is the responsibility of the adults in children's lives to offer healthy food choices that taste good and look appealing. Watch portion sizes by setting limits on food choices.

### Other Considerations:

**Provide time each day for planned physical activity.** Enjoy this time with the children by participating with them. Find activities you can enjoy together such as walks, sports, games and unstructured play time.

**Reduce "screen time".** It is recommended that TV, computer, and video games be limited to 2 hours per day. This leaves plenty of time for more physical activity!