

## **New Year's Resolutions: Getting Your Kids Active!**

As we enter the New Year, people often think of what their New Year's resolution should be. Sure, many adults make the resolution to exercise more and eat better, but what about those same resolutions for their children? The rate of obesity has reached epidemic proportions for America's children and adolescents. As of 2006, 15% of the pediatric population was overweight, with that percentage rapidly climbing (Evans, Renaud, Finkelstein, Kamerow, and Brown, 2006). Obesity puts the patient at 15-fold greater risk for many long-term health consequences such as: cardiovascular morbidity and mortality, hypertension, hyperlipidemia, and arteriosclerosis. The increase in fat build-up is also a risk factor in the development of insulin resistance and type II diabetes mellitus (Chanoine, Hampl, Jensen, Boldrin, and Hauptman, 2005). Many of these consequential diseases were once considered to have an adult onset, but many practitioners are seeing them much more frequently in the primary pediatric setting. Looking at these startling statistics, it is easy to see that developing a healthy lifestyle needs to be at the forefront of everyone's New Year's resolutions.

Last month Dr. O spoke about how to promote healthy eating habits and how it is imperative to develop those habits at a young age. Healthy eating when combined with exercise is the best way to combat childhood obesity. Developing permanent healthy lifestyles remains the main goal of therapy for the treatment and prevention of childhood obesity.

With today's commercially driven society many children have abandoned outside play for playing with toys, computers, and video games inside. Promoting playing outside and getting exercise will help keep children healthy. It will also help them to develop a healthy lifestyle for the rest of their lives, and will decrease their risk of developing long-term health consequences of an inactive lifestyle.

### **How do I get my kids active?**

Parents should start by looking at themselves first and portraying a positive role model by having an active lifestyle themselves. Making exercise a part of parent's every day activities will help children learn to adopt those habits as part of their own lifestyle. Planning family outings and events that center around physical activity will help them achieve a healthy lifestyle without it being forced on them. Some ideas are: going on a bike ride, planning a camping trip, a game of kickball or football in the backyard, swimming, hopscotch, and jump rope. Exercise should never be used as a punishment or be forced upon children or it will be resisted and result in a constant battle and little to no actual physical activity. Making exercise fun will help children adopt that lifestyle as their own without it being forced upon them. Promoting children to play together and not alone also helps to promote active play.

As we enter 2010 let's all make an effort to combat childhood obesity and promote a healthy lifestyle through eating well and regular physical activity. Plan a fun activity for your children this week that is centered around physical fitness. Make being active not a chore but an exciting event that the whole family looks forward to, and soon it will become part of the normal family routine. Make an active, healthy lifestyle your family's New Year's resolution!

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