Childhood Obesity: Your Options

By Amy Bentley

COMING TO TERMS WITH OBESITY

"Looks can be deceiving. It can be hard for parents to tell if their child is obese," says Dr. Vaquero Solans. "Parents who are overweight or obese might not ask about their children's weight. It is the duty of the physician to talk about that. Ask your pediatrician about your child's weight. We use specific body-mass index charts for children. BMI differs for each age and gender, because they are growing. Ask your pediatrician for an assessment."

PREVENTING AND TREATING OBESITY

"Prevention really starts during pregnancy. Mom should have a healthy weight gain while pregnant and keep as active as she can considering her condition," says Dr. Vaquero Solans. She also pointed out that childhood obesity is not a problem that can be solved by medication. "Changes in lifestyle are the best. It's a combination of healthier diet and promoting physical activity. Nutrition counseling by the pediatrician, a specialist or a dietitian will help."

GET MOVING

Exercise helps keep kids fit and should be a part of every child's daily routine, says Dr. Vaquero Solans, who encourages parents to set a good example. She offered these tips to make exercise a lifestyle habit for kids that starts in infancy:

- Start with the baby. Place him on his tummy so he will be encouraged to move around more.
- Older children should have at least one hour a day of exercise. "This does not need to be all at once. It can be short bursts of activity of something intense 15 minutes at a time four times a day."
- Don't let children age three or older sit in a stroller. They are old enough to walk.
- Take the kids to the playground or on a walk regularly.
- Involve the kids in sports or activities like dance when possible.

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1 in 3+
NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN THE U.S. WHO WERE OVERWEIGHT OR OBESIVE IN 2012

7 PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN AGES 6-11 IN THE U.S. WHO WERE OBESIVE IN 1980

Almost 18
PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN AGES 6-11 IN THE U.S. WHO WERE OBESIVE IN 2012

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