

How You Can Prevent Childhood Obesity



Whether your child is at risk of becoming overweight or currently at a healthy weight, you can take proactive measures to get or keep things on the right track. Parents play a crucial role in helping children who are struggling with their weight feel loved and in control of their weight. In addition, consider the following advice:

Be sensitive to your child's needs and feelings. Becoming active is an important lifestyle change for your child to make, but your child is more likely to stick to those changes if you let him/her choose what physical activities he/she is comfortable with.

Find reasons to praise your child's efforts. Celebrate small, incremental changes but don't reward with food. Choose other ways to mark your child's accomplishments, such as going to the bowling alley or a local park.

Help your child focus on positive goals. For example, point out that he/she can now bike for more than 20 minutes without getting tired or can run the required number of laps in gym class.

Be patient. Many overweight children grow into their extra pounds as they get taller. Realize that an intense focus on your child's eating habits and weight can easily backfire, leading him or her to overeat even more or possibly making him or her more prone to developing an eating disorder.

Your child's best chance to achieve and maintain a healthy weight is to start eating a healthy diet and exercising more. Here are some steps you can take at home to help your child succeed:

Be a role model. Choose healthy foods and active pastimes for yourself. If you need to lose weight, doing so will motivate your child to do likewise. Children are good learners and they often mimic what they see.

Involve the whole family. Make healthy eating a priority and emphasize how important it is for the whole family to be physically active. This avoids singling out the child who is overweight.

SAVE THE DATE

Our Lunch-N-Learn is on Thursday, September 15. The topic is "Creating a Nutrient Dense Diet on a Budget."

The Fall Challenge starts October 3. Details coming soon!

Recipe: butternut squash shells and cheese skillet

Ingredients

- 3 cups uncooked whole wheat pasta shells
- 4 cups 1/2-inch cubed uncooked butternut squash
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt substitute (we used Mrs. dash)
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- 3/4 cup low-sodium vegetable stock
- 1 1/2 cups low-fat milk
- 6 ounces grated low-fat provolone cheese
- 2 ounces grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoons bread crumbs
- Fresh chopped herbs for garnish (sage, basil, cilantro or thyme will all work)

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Prepare water for pasta and once it comes to a boil, cook pasta according to directions, then drain and set aside.
2. While water is boiling, heat a large cast-iron (or oven-safe) skillet over medium-low heat. Add olive oil, then toss in squash with salt, pepper and nutmeg. Add stock and cover skillet, cooking for 15-20 minutes, stirring occasionally, until squash is soft and can easily be mashed. Remove cover and reduce heat to low. Mash squash with a potato masher or forks, smoothing it out with a spoon to remove all of the chunks. Add in milk, 4 ounces of provolone and all of the Parmesan cheese, stirring until melted and smooth, about 5 minutes. Taste and season more, if desired.
3. Fold shells into the sauce, taking a few minutes to fully toss the shells so they are all coated. Top with remaining cheese and bread crumbs and bake for 15 minutes. If a bubbly, golden topping is desired, broil for 1-2 minutes on high after cooking. Sprinkle with fresh herbs and serve.



Nutrition Information per serving (makes 5 servings): 372 calories | 17 g fat | 47 g carbohydrates | 20 g protein | 7 g sugar | 22 mg cholesterol | 3g dietary fiber | 352 g sodium