

OUR CHILDREN ARE OUR FUTURE

Eat Well and Play to Keep Obesity at Bay



The Crushing Truth of Childhood Obesity

Childhood obesity is a significant public health issue in the United States that has reached epidemic proportions. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the prevalence of childhood obesity has more than tripled since the 1970s. Childhood obesity is a significant risk factor for numerous health problems, including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and asthma.

There are numerous causes of childhood obesity, including genetics, environmental factors and lifestyle behaviors. Genetics can play a role in the development of obesity, predisposing some children to the condition due to their family history. However, genetics alone cannot account for the rapid increase in childhood obesity prevalence observed in recent decades.

Environmental factors such as access to unhealthy foods and beverages and a lack of physical activity, are significant contributors to childhood obesity. Children living in neighborhoods with limited access to healthy food options, (or food deserts), are more likely to consume a diet high in calories, sugar and fat which can lead to obesity. Additionally, many children living in urban areas may not engage in regular physical activity due to a lack of safe outdoor play spaces or limited access to physical education programs.

Put the Video Games on Pause

Summer is here! School is out and the video games are in full effect in many households. With pre-planning, research and resources you can pull off a summer full of activity for any age! Here are a few options to consider:

Visit Your Local Cook County Library

At the local library, you can inquire about summer programming which could include family movie nights, summer reading programs, craft sessions or teen clubs depending on which branch you visit. [Find your local library here.](#)

Design a Nature-Based Scavenger Hunt

Create your own version of a scavenger hunt with as little as a paper and pencil. Nothing could be simpler: take a sheet of paper, some colored pencils and that's it! Adjust the difficulty level based on age and hunt location (i.e., park, beach, etc). [Click here for fun scavenger hunt ideas!](#)

Visit Your Local Parks & Recreation Centers

At local recreation centers or [Forest Preserves of Cook County](#), you can inquire about overnight camps, day camps, workshops and intramural athletic clubs not available during the school year.



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Kid-Friendly Recipes for a Healthy Summer Break

Overcoming obesity cannot be accomplished with physical activity alone. A healthy diet alongside fitness can significantly reduce the risk of obesity in children. When the time calls for “fast-food,” consider one of these healthy recipes, ready in 20 minutes or less:

1 Rainbow Veggie Wraps

These wraps are colorful, flavorful and packed with veggies, making them a healthy lunch or snack option for kids.

<https://www.pcrm.org/good-nutrition/plant-based-diets/recipes/veggie-rainbow-wraps>

2 Two-Ingredient Dough Margherita Pizza

You will not believe how quick and easy it is to make this healthy pizza. Just roll, top and bake and you will have a delicious meal in under half an hour. This can also be made as gluten- or dairy-free!

<https://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/265515/two-ingredient-dough-margherita-pizza>

3 Vegan Burritos

Burritos do not always have to contain beef—this 20-minute version uses tofu or black bean crumbles, which taste delicious and offer up a healthy dose of protein. No beef with this recipe!

<https://www.tasteofhome.com/article/vegan-burritos/>

4 Salmon Burgers

This recipe for prepping salmon patties (or salmon cakes) make for a nutritious meal and easy, fun practice in the kitchen for kids. Substitute salmon over beef burgers for a healthier option.

<https://www.eatingwell.com/article/7595505/how-to-make-salmon-patties>

5 Five ingredient Baked Falafel

Are you looking for a healthy alternative to the chicken nugget? The falafel just might be the answer as it is made from chickpeas (allergy-friendly) and pairs well with a carb or dipping sauce.

<https://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/266454/falafel>



Whether you use the recipes here or create your own, the goal is passing on healthy eating habits to your child so that those habits eventually lead to a healthy, balanced life. Happy cooking!

Remember, families that practice a healthy lifestyle together have a better chance at success. By making small changes to your child’s diet and encouraging regular physical activity, you can help them develop lifelong healthy habits. Work with your child to ensure they have a healthy and bright future.