

Spring a good time to instill healthy habits in kids

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(HealthDay)—The arrival of warm weather is a perfect time to make

family lifestyle changes that can help children achieve and maintain a healthy weight, a doctor says.

In the past 30 years, obesity has more than doubled among children and more than tripled among teens in the United States, said Dr. Rosa Cataldo, director of Healthy Weight and Wellness Center at Stony Brook Children's Hospital in New York.

"Childhood obesity is a serious—and growing—problem in the United States, so parents should be concerned about their child's weight," she said in a hospital news release.

"We are not talking about a few extra pounds, but rather a condition that can have a negative effect on a child's overall health," Cataldo added.

Now is the perfect time to get the entire family outside to do activities such as cycling, soccer or having fun on the playground, she advised. One suggestion is to have children wear a pedometer to track their physical activity and to take at least 10,000 steps a day.

Be sure everyone drinks water when they're physically active. Don't give children sugary beverages such as sodas, juices or sports drinks, Cataldo said.

Eat fresh fruits and vegetables, and try to buy them at local farmers' markets where they're cheaper. Prepare seasonal salads and grill food on the barbeque, she said.

Read food labels carefully and pay attention to the order of ingredients. If sugar is one of the first three ingredients listed, the product is too high in sugar, Cataldo said.

More information: The U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health

Promotion outlines how to keep [children at a healthy weight](#).

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