

The Wellness Family

Dr. Roller Keeps You Informed

Healthy Choices

Food - Obesity - Time

Everywhere you turn – radio, television or magazines – there’s a message about the “failing health of the average American”. It’s clear that our country is finally becoming aware of our overall lack of health; however, along with this new awareness comes a variety of messages about your options. So, which health choices are the best choices and which are simply self-serving commercialism? It’s a mass-media blitz, Dr. Roller wants to help you sort out.

Where to Start

It all starts with healthier eating habits. When your children are sitting down to study, do you offer them a snack? If so, what kind of snack are you offering? Consider this, most kids think a “snack” is a cold slice of pizza and a can of coke but there are healthier alternatives. Fruit is a perfect snack; with its natural sugars, it satisfies a child’s desire for something sweet while not loading them up with hydrogenated oils, bleached flour and processed sugar.

Instead of pizza and a coke provide your child with a glass of water and one of these healthy choices...

- A sliced apple and some cheese
- Celery with peanut butter
- Or even peanut butter with a sliced apple

Remember that children want what tastes good, and that doesn’t have to mean it’s bad.

It’s Time for Healthier Choices

With this in mind, maybe it’s no surprise that in a study of 168 US preschoolers, not one child ate the five recommended daily servings of fruits and vegetables in a week; while, in most cases, the only fruit intake was in the form of juice (considered in this test to be an alternative form of fruit).

Yet the truth of the matter is that juice has been associated with:

- Diarrhea,
- Growth Failure,
- Short Stature, and
- Obesity.

At approximately 9 gallons per child per year, children under the age of five consume more fruit juice than any other age group, with apple juice being the most popular choice. Children love juices because they taste sweet and parents approve because they are “natural”. Yes, naturally high in sugars and naturally low in vitamins and minerals. Not to mention that an 8-ounce glass of apple juice is equivalent to eating three apples.



“...Children want what tastes good, and that doesn’t have to mean it’s bad.”

What child needs the sugar found in three apples? It’s much better to offer your child one apple: satisfy their hunger, their need for something sweet as well as satisfy 1/5 of their suggested daily servings of fruit and vegetables all with one wise decision.

Obesity Awareness

A recent study by the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and its colleagues revealed that...

- Only half of obese children are diagnosed as such
- The average pediatrician isn’t informing the parent that their child is dangerously overweight
- And most parents don’t realize their child is obese because they don’t understand the standard for obesity, which is widely accepted as weighing more than 20% of the average weight for a specific age.

In this same study, of the 2,515 office visits reviewed:

- 244 children met the criteria for obesity,
- While only 50% were documented as such

Of the more than 120 obese children, not diagnosed:

- 31% were preschool children and
- 76% were adolescents.

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What happened?

With the change in the American family structure we've dramatically changed the value and effectiveness of the American family. Cultural changes have made it almost impossible for parents to be there when their children get home and the average child is being told, "don't go outside until one of us gets home". So, what does a school age child do when left home alone? They watch TV, surf the net or play video games.

Today's child is not spending the amount of time outside doing a wide range of activities that are healthy and interpersonal. With the increasing affordability of electronics there are televisions, computers and entertainment systems available to occupy their time.

Current statistics show that:

- In the average American home a TV is on for at least 7 hours and 40 minutes a day.
- 41% of US households have more than two television sets and 56% of all children ages 8-16 have a TV set in their bedroom
- Children spend 19 hours and 40 minutes a week watching TV and 81% of that television viewing is unsupervised.
- Overall, the American child spends 4 hours and 41 minutes a day in front of a screen of some kind, albeit a television screen, computer screen or movie screen.

Considering these statistics, is it any surprise that our children are unhealthy, overweight and suffer from bad eating habits? They aren't being taught healthy choices or shown better examples.

It's time that we start making healthier choices for our family and in so doing create healthier families. It's time to foster conversation and activity.

Dear Parent,

Dr. Roller is dedicated to providing you with the absolute best in family wellness care. Along with that dedication comes an understanding that an informed parent makes wise decisions for their child. So, take a moment today to ask Dr. Roller about any concerns you may have regarding your child or your family's health.

Dr. Roller's 4 Week "Healthy Family" Plan

1. Monitor how much time your child spends each day in front of a screen (whether computer, television or video) and begin to reduce it. If it's more than six hours, decrease it to four, then three, then two, gradually, one week at a time.
2. Monitor what your family is eating and introduce healthier meals and snacks. An increase in health leads to an increase in energy. You could find yourself wanting to take the kids bicycling around the neighborhood or rollerblading in the park instead of sitting on the couch with your favorite video.
3. Increase "family time" and thus naturally decrease sedentary time.
 - ✓ No more television during meals – instead, encourage your children to talk about the issues in their lives, discuss their feelings and share their opinions.
 - ✓ Have a game night once a week; the entire family plays Monopoly, Scrabble or Yahtzee and the TV stays off.
 - ✓ Go for a walk after dinner. The questions your children ask when walking around the block could surprise you.
 - ✓ Start a book club within your family. Have your children choose a book for the entire family to read then, once a week, get together to discuss the current chapter.
 - ✓ Or, better yet, find an article that discusses current events and read it with your child and then talk about their opinions.

The point is to do whatever is necessary to get your child out from in front of a video screen and participating with your family. Regardless of where you choose to start the change it's certainly the time for it.

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