

Seeds

of Learning

- 2 How to choose books for your children
- 3 Age-by-Age Book Guide
- 4 A word from your district

Obesity is a **weighty** problem for youngsters

The national news is abuzz with this country's fight against obesity—adult and childhood obesity alike. In fact, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, obesity rates among children younger than five, even, have doubled in the last two decades.

Additional research has shown that overweight toddlers are showing early signs of health problems, such as diabetes, high blood pressure and cholesterol, heart disease, and joint problems—all of which were once unheard of in children so young. And, studies show that overweight youngsters are more likely to be overweight teens and adults.

Doctors blame the growth in childhood obesity on less active lifestyles and poor eating habits.

"Children begin forming their eating and lifestyle habits in childhood," says a Finnish doctor who conducted a study on childhood obesity and fat intake. "This is why children need to start early—once they begin eating solid foods—eating a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, lean meats, and good fats found in fish, nuts, seeds, and oils from plants, rather than in many processed foods, which are also high in calories and sugar."

Teaching children to follow a low-fat diet will be effective when they reach their teen years and begin to eat more meals outside

of the home, he adds. "Children will be in the habit of choosing healthier foods, even when they are not eating at home."

The alarming rate of preschoolers' growing waistlines prompted the United States Department of Agriculture to launch a Web site last October, My-Pyramid for Preschoolers, designed specifically

"Doctors blame the growth in childhood obesity on less active lifestyles and poor eating habits."

continued on **page 2**





Obesity...

continued from page 1

for parents and caregivers to provide individualized nutrition guidance for children ages 2-5. The site allows parents to customize a pyramid to get detailed information about what and how much to feed their children based on their ages, genders, and activity levels.

“We’re giving a helping hand to families so they can help their kids to eat a more nutritious diet,” says Brian Wansink from the USDA. “What I find personally most helpful with my two preschoolers is how to talk with them about what to eat and tips on how to have fun with my kids around the dinner table.”

They are what they eat

One of the best ways to encourage healthy development and to prevent children from becoming overweight is to begin teaching positive attitudes about eating and physical activity from the time they are born. Here are some suggestions on how parents can help instill good nutritional habits at each stage of development.

Birth through the toddler years.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that babies be exclusively breastfed or given an iron-fortified formula from birth to six months of age. The nutrients contained in breast milk or formula provide babies with the essential vitamins and minerals they need to grow at a healthy rate.

When babies are introduced to solids, typically around six months (some doctors suggest earlier while others



suggest waiting longer; check with your child’s pediatrician), iron-fortified, single-grain cereals such as rice or barley are recommended. As fruits and vegetables are introduced to your child’s diet, be sure to offer babies a wide variety, but heed the general rule of introducing one new food no sooner than every four days. Doing this will help pinpoint any allergic reactions and digestive issues a new baby food may cause.

As babies get older and learn to gum, chew, and swallow small lumps and bumps, their food should continue to be a rainbow of fruits and veggies, lean meats, and complex carbohydrates.

Up until age two, the AAP recommends that children who drink cows’ milk should have the full-fat version of this and other dairy products. Low-fat versions at this age do not offer the fat and fatty acids children need for healthy brain, vision and nerve development. After age two, however, lean and lower-fat versions of dairy products are recommended by pediatricians.

18 months to 3 years old. With so much to see, touch, and explore, many toddlers have little interest in slowing down long

Need a helping hand?

Visit <http://MyPyramid.gov> to customize a food pyramid for your child and learn about several real-life strategies provided to help parents introduce new food to preschoolers, deal with picky eaters, and encourage children to eat healthy foods.

enough to eat a meal. Don’t panic if your little one doesn’t devour everything on his lunch or dinner plate. Have a stash of healthy snacks close by to keep your busy one fueled throughout the day. Try to keep individual-sized containers or baggies of whole-wheat crackers or cereal, pretzels, toddler-friendly fruits and veggies, such as melon chunks and apple slices, and cucumber circles and baby carrots on hand. Cheese sticks and yogurt also pack a big nutritional punch. Offer your children water to drink throughout that day rather than sugar juices or sodas. If you provide your child with juice, aim for 100 percent fruit juice and limit consumption to four to six ounces a day.

As your children grow and develop preferences for foods, your once-eager eater may suddenly become picky. This doesn’t mean you should stop introducing new, healthy food choices. Just go slow. Experts say it can take a toddler up to 10 introductions of a new food before giving it a try. Set the example by eating healthy foods yourself, then offer children small bites of food you eat along with their own favorites, but don’t make a big deal about whether they eat them or not. If new foods are within your child’s reach, they are more likely to try them when they are ready to expand their diets.



Ages 3 to 5. As they grow, children become more independent. Therefore, a great way to encourage healthy eating at this age is to involve children in the meal process—from helping decide what to prepare, making a grocery list, shopping for food, preparing the meal, and serving themselves. If your children feel proud that they helped assemble the tossed salad or counted out the sweet potatoes at the grocery store, they just might eat them, too. Search for recipes together in these kid-friendly books: *Mom & Me Cookbook* by Annabel Karmel, *Salad People and More Real Recipes: A New Cookbook for Preschoolers and Up* by Mollie Katzen, and *Children's Quick and Easy Cookbook* by Angela Wilkes.

Good nutrition and physical activity go hand-in-hand

As important as good nutrition is, it needs to partner with physical activity in order to help young children grow and be as fit as they can be.

“Even children with wholesome diets can become overweight and out of shape if they don’t burn the fuel they take in,” says one pediatrician.

Young children who enjoy movement and play tend to stay active throughout their lives. Staying fit can help improve children’s self-esteem—even very young children can become self-conscious or be teased if they are overweight and can’t keep up physically with their peers. Regular physical activity will also decrease the risk of breathing problems and sleep apnea, which commonly afflict overweight youngsters.

A few years ago, the AAP released a position statement on physical activity and childhood obesity, which called for the promotion of unorganized free play time for preschool-aged children. It stated that chil-

dren should be engaged in physical activity for at least one hour a day, if not more, and screen time—including TV, computers, and electronic games—should be limited to less than two hours a day.

“Fortunately, kids are naturally active, and I find that I don’t have to tell my children how to get moving,” says a father of a two and four year old. “It’s just really important that we, as parents, provide the time and safe environment for our children to play in. Our children and their imaginations will do the rest.”

All the physical activities that kids do naturally—run, slide, skip, jump, and scoot around—have the added benefits of strengthening the muscles they will need to use in school when learning such skills as reading and writing. Unfortunately, teachers who work with young children are finding that more and more children are beginning school without the proper strength and physical development to take on new learning challenges. This leads to such problems as an inability to hold a pencil properly, slouching due to an inability to hold the body upright for lengths of time or a lack of ability to hold the head upright and make proper eye contact with teachers and classmates.

Get physical during family time

Fall is a wonderful time to get outside and enjoy the beauty of nature. When you exercise regularly on your own or with your children, you are a positive role model for fitness. Here are some ideas for fun activities designed to keep families moving together:

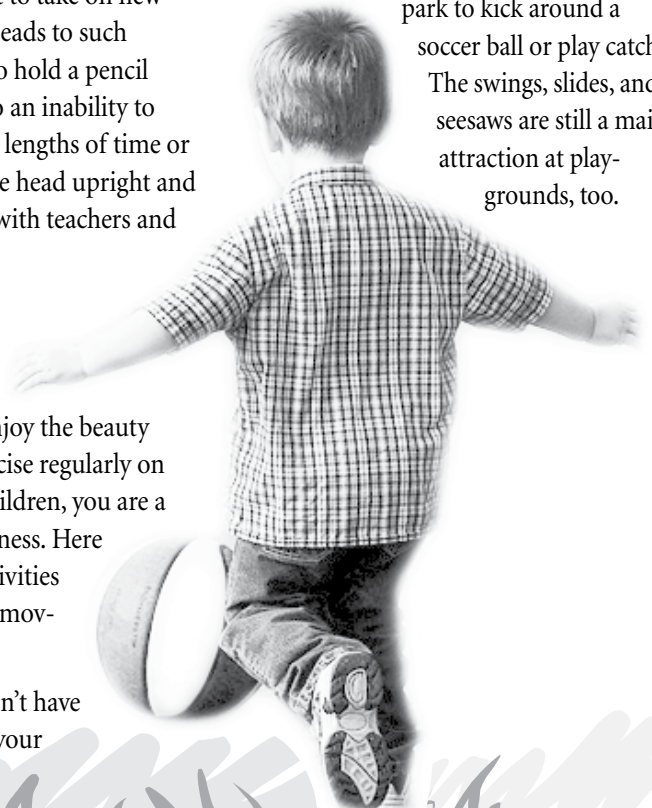
Raking the leaves doesn’t have to be a chore. Encourage your

children to help you rake leaves into piles with their own tools. Getting to jump into a huge pile afterwards is great motivation. Bagging and helping haul the leaves to the curb also provides a heart-healthy workout.

Take a nature walk to look for all the signs of the changing season (e.g., colorful leaves, squirrels and chipmunks gathering acorns, frost on the ground).

Go apple and/or pumpkin picking. A hike through the fields looking for just the right pumpkin or your favorite type of apple tree and then carrying and hauling—or rolling—your precious finds to the car are fun and active ways to spend a fall afternoon. Some farms also have corn mazes that you and your children can race through.

Don’t forget the parks and playgrounds. Summer might be gone, but the weather is still good for a trip to the park to kick around a soccer ball or play catch. The swings, slides, and seesaws are still a main attraction at playgrounds, too.



Seeds of Learning



4

Board of Education

Kevin Thompson, President
Albert Falcone, Vice President

Trustees

Sandra Beloncik
Gregory Campoli
Michael DellaVila
Robert Sheehan
Carl Strang

Superintendent

Dr. Valerie Kelsey

Published in cooperation with the
Capital Region BOCES Communications Service
Tara Mitchell, Editor

Schalmont Central School District

401 Duaneburg Road
Schenectady, New York 12306

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Schenectady, NY
Permit No. 703

POSTAL Customer

Check out all the Schalmont information on our
Web site at: www.schalmont.org

Fall 2009: **Childhood obesity**

The 1000 Book Club

This program is for ALL district residents.

This Book Club is available for all district children between the ages of 3 and 6. Parents and children are invited to take out book bags containing 10 books for up to 3 weeks at a time. The bag contains many different types of books. The parent is responsible for keeping a record of bags the child has borrowed, and when they have read all 100 bags, they will become a "1000 Book Child." Parents are invited to use the program daily from 7:30 a.m. – 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. The school will be open on Thursday evenings from 5-7 p.m. This will allow working parents' children to participate in the program. It will not be open during vacations or on snow days or holidays.

To locate the program, enter Jefferson School through the new entrance on Ford Avenue. Check in with the school secretary. She will direct you to the 1000 Book closet. Look for our big "STOP SIGN." The closet is located next to the K-2 Health Office.

If you have concerns about your child's development...

The Schalmont Central School District wants to help ensure that children receive any special services they may need as early as possible.

If you are concerned about your child's development in any area, first speak with your pediatrician. If you still have questions or concerns, please contact Shari Lontrato, chairperson, Committee on Preschool Special Education at 887-5600. She can help begin the process of determining what services your child may need before entering school. For more information on the special education process, go to www.schalmont.org, click on Special Education and follow the link to the preschool information.

Immunizations

New York State requires all children who will attend public school to be immunized against chicken pox (varicella), polio, rubella, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, mumps, measles, Hib (Haemophilus influenza type b) and hepatitis B. Proof of immunization for new students must be presented for admission.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

NOVEMBER

- 10 Preschool Story Hour, 10-11 a.m.
@ Jefferson Elementary School
- 17 Preschool Story Hour, 10-11 a.m.
@ Jefferson Elementary School
- 24 Preschool Story Hour, 10-11 a.m.
@ Jefferson Elementary School

DECEMBER

- 1 Preschool Story Hour, 10-11 a.m.
@ Jefferson Elementary School
- 5 Lunch with Santa, 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.
@ Jefferson Elementary School
- 5 Craft Fair, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
@ Jefferson Elementary School

* Note: For Preschool Story Hour, please call 356-9129 to reserve a spot.

