



Department of Health
140 County Highway 33W
Suite 3
Cooperstown, NY 13326
Phone: (607) 547-6483
Fax: (607) 547-4385

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Childhood Obesity

Childhood obesity is reaching epidemic proportions. Today, 21 percent of elementary age students in New York State -- and fully 24 percent of those in New York City -- are obese.

Significant causes of childhood obesity are poor nutritional choices and a sedentary lifestyle. Few children eat the recommended five or more daily servings of vegetables and fruits. More than one-third of young people (age 12 to 21) do not engage in regular physical activities.

Nationally, the percentage of young people who are obese has more than tripled in the past 30 years. Obesity is now the most common nutritional disorder of children and adolescents in the United States.

A person is defined as overweight if his or her Body Mass Index (BMI) is between 25 and 30, and defined as obese if the BMI is more than 30. (To calculate BMI, divide weight in pounds by the square of the person's height in inches and multiply by 704.5.)

Obesity in children potentially shortens life spans, increases the likelihood of chronic disease, and lowers the quality of lives. According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a severely obese person -- one with a BMI greater than 40 -- has more than seven times the risk of diabetes and six times the risk of high blood pressure than a person who maintains a healthy weight. Obesity is also a major contributor to heart disease, arthritis, and asthma.

Inactivity and poor nutrition are the key factors leading to the current epidemic of childhood obesity. Healthy food choices and daily physical activity can do much to reverse this growing health problem.

The New York State Health Department recommends increasing daily consumption of vegetables and fruit, and three or more servings of low-fat milk or other low-fat dairy products or other calcium-rich foods every day. Children should get at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day.

Sixty minutes of physical activity is not hard to fit into the lives of our children. And it's important for parents to set an example and to buy healthful food for their children. Crispy vegetables, tasty fruits, and low-fat or fat-free yogurt can make healthful snack alternatives to candy and chips. The next time you reach for milk on the store shelf, choose low-fat or fat-free instead of whole milk.

For more information, visit on-line at www.nyhealth.gov or call:

Otsego County Department of Health
140 County Highway 33W-Suite 3
Cooperstown, NY 13326
(607) 547-4230