

Children's Health Update

Combating Childhood Obesity: Instill Healthy Habits Early

(NAPSA)—According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the number of children between the ages of 2 and 5 who are considered overweight has nearly quadrupled over the past few decades. Today, approximately 20 percent of toddlers fall into the overweight category, compared with just 5 percent a generation ago. One significant factor may be the increase in portion sizes, which have more than tripled in recent years.

As the childhood obesity rate continues to rise, parents can take proactive steps to help their toddlers build a foundation of lifelong healthy habits. MyPyramid.gov, a project of the U.S. Department of Agriculture that is focused on changing the way American families eat, states that parents are the most important influencers on their children's eating habits. Simple practices such as teaching correct portion control and encouraging self-serving play an important role in maintaining a healthy weight.

During the toddler years, children possess the natural instinct of knowing when they are hungry and when they are full, which makes it the perfect time to encourage them to listen to their bodies and find ways to make family mealtime a fun, educational experience.

Following are tips from Evenflo to help toddlers develop lifelong healthy eating habits:

• **Make portion control a priority:** Portion sizes are bigger than ever. Evenflo has collaborated with Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center Interdisciplinary Feeding Team to develop a new line of toddler-feeding products called Smart Steps, designed

Parents can help toddlers develop lifelong healthy eating habits by:

- Applying a self-serve policy
- Turning off the TV during mealtime
- Offering a new food multiple times until it becomes familiar.
- To learn more about products that encourage correct portion control, visit www.evenflo.com/smartsteps.



to address portion control and teach children and parents the amount of food they need.

• **Apply a self-serve policy:** The American Medical Association (AMA) recommends allowing children to serve themselves so that they can self-regulate their meals. During the ages of 3 to 5, kids' natural instinct of feeling hungry versus feeling full is changing; now is the time to help them listen to their bodies.

• **Turn off the TV:** Just like adults, children will consume more calories when they eat in front of the television. Kids are more likely to pay attention to signs of fullness when they aren't distracted by a favorite cartoon character.

• **Don't worry if at first you don't succeed:** MyPyramid.gov recommends feeding children a wide variety of healthy foods, but it's normal for kids to balk at unfamiliar choices. You may need to offer the new food up to 10 times before it is deemed familiar and acceptable, so remember to try, try again. It's also helpful to introduce a new food in tiny portions, so that little ones can "taste" without being overwhelmed.

For more information about toddler nutrition, visit www.evenflo.com/smartsteps.