

Children's Health

Early Lessons In Healthy Living

(NAPSA)—America's waistline is expanding at an alarming rate and it's not just adults who are contributing to the extra inches.

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, the percentage of overweight youth has more than tripled since 1980. This means that nearly nine million children and teens (ages 6 to 19) are at higher risk for developing a number of health complications, including high blood pressure and heart disease.

Fortunately, the federal government is taking action against this national epidemic and has recently introduced legislation in a majority of states mandating time for recess and physical education, as well as nutrition education, particularly in elementary schools.

Teaching healthy behaviors to young children is an effective strategy for promoting healthy lives for the future. Check out the following tips from *Healthy Steps for Healthy Lives*, Nestlé USA's in-school nutrition curriculum for preschoolers and kindergarteners, and establish a lifetime of healthy living for your kids.

- **Reward with family fun.**

Instead of offering food as an incentive for good behavior, reward your child with a special activity, such as a visit to the local zoo or neighborhood playground.

- **Avoid "good vs. bad" talk.**

To reinforce balance, variety and moderation, teach kids to think of foods as "everyday" and "sometimes" foods. Everyday foods are foods such as grains, vegetables and fruit, while sometimes foods include treats like cookies and chips.

- **Teach their taste buds.**

Encourage tiny tastes of at least



Physical activity and good nutrition are the source of healthy living.

one new food item, such as broccoli or brown rice, per week. Although it may take up to eight tries before children accept the new food, this process exposes their taste buds to different flavors, making them more likely to continue healthy eating patterns as they grow older.

- **Turn the TV off.** It's easy to let the television occupy your kids while you're busy with other things, but try to limit their television time by setting a viewing schedule of only a couple of their favorite shows.

- **Practice what you preach.** According to a survey conducted by the American Dietetic Association, kids rank parents as their top role models. So be sure to incorporate healthy eating and exercising habits in your own life.

For other healthy living suggestions, visit VeryBestKids.com. The site contains a variety of kid-friendly activities and recipes that will keep the entire family moving toward a healthier lifestyle.