

# Children's Health

## Parents Hold The Key To Fighting Youth Obesity

by Barbara J. Moore, Ph.D.,  
President and CEO of  
Shape Up America!

(NAPSA)—Many children's eating and exercise habits put them at risk for life-threatening diseases. Whether because of too much food consumption and not enough exercise or too much time sitting in front of the TV and computer screens, the obesity epidemic is rapidly spreading into youngsters' lives.

Approximately one-third of adults in the United States are overweight, nearly another third are obese, while rates of obesity among youths have tripled over the past 20 years. An estimated 15.5 percent—nine million—youths are considered seriously overweight and experiencing higher rates of so-called adult diseases such as diabetes and hypertension with another 10 percent "at risk" for becoming overweight.

Parents play a primary role in their children's healthy eating and exercise patterns. According to a recent Cornell University study, "The amount of food you put on your child's plate is the main factor influencing how much he or she will eat." As for physical activity, there are many things that parents can do to influence and encourage their children to engage in recreational activities and sports.

Parents often need help planning healthy meals and activities to influence children to make better lifestyle choices. That is why Shape Up America!, a national nonprofit obesity awareness and prevention group, has teamed up with Cumberland Packing Corporation, the manufacturer and mar-



**A new program aims to help parents make healthy choices for their family, choosing activities that promote physical activity.**

keter of *Sweet'N Low* zero-calorie sweetener, to design a new national program called "Get Hip & Get Fit." To assist parents, "top of mind" posters entitled "20 Tips For Getting Your Family On Track" and "More Tips For Family Fitness Fun" are available online, for downloading, printing and hanging on the refrigerator or back door. Easy to do and fun for everyone, a few tips from the posters include:

- Play a "hot potato" game of Frisbee.
- Go swimming and play water tag or water volleyball.
- Go for family walks after meals.
- Rent a paddleboat at a park.
- Park the car AS FAR AWAY from the entrance as possible.

Parents can find helpful tools online at [www.shapeup.org/FitTips](http://www.shapeup.org/FitTips) and [www.sweetnlow.com/FitTips](http://www.sweetnlow.com/FitTips).

Parents can do much to reverse the trend of obesity in America and promote a healthy lifestyle for children—one that balances food intake with physical activity.