

Youth wellness program offered free in September

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Pediatric Home Service (PHS), based in Roseville, knows how to take care of children. Since 1990, PHS has provided specialized health care services for technology-dependent children in their home, with their families. PHS is one of the only home health care organizations in the country to focus on the health of children, and believes that good nutrition and a healthy lifestyle are important to taking care of children.

PHS developed the Take 2 program, a short-term health and wellness program for a lifetime of results, and began piloting the program in early 2007. The 10-week session offers twice-weekly classes and four follow-up sessions for children and their parents.

This comprehensive program is family-focused and parent-driven to help obese children and their families learn how to change and improve nutrition, attitude and exercise in an interactive setting. Take 2 is currently enrolling a limited number of obese children in grades four through six, on a first-come, first-served basis for a free pilot session starting Sept. 10. Later, Take 2 will be offered for a fee.

Take 2 is not a diet, but a comprehensive, participatory educational program. Classes are taught by health care professionals including a registered dietitian, certified personal trainers, and a state-licensed social worker. The 90-minute meetings are fun for children and their parents. Instructors motivate and educate participants to help them understand how to lose weight, gain energy and live a healthy lifestyle.

A typical class features interactive instruction on a variety of subjects including learning how to shop for healthy foods and prepare tasty, nutritious meals that are filling. Each session also features a fun activity designed to increase the child's heart rate for at least 30 minutes. Children will gain confidence, knowledge and be motivated to continue their healthy behavior long after the session is complete.

Take 2 was a natural extension of PHS' expertise and experience taking care of children. PHS knows the high costs and health hazards of obesity. Obesity-associated annual hospital costs for children and youth have tripled over the past two decades, rising from \$35 million in 1979-1981 to \$127 million in 1997-1999. After adjusting for inflation and converting to 2004 dollars, the national healthcare expenditures related to obesity and overweight adults alone range from \$98 billion to \$129 billion annually.

Over the past three decades, the childhood obesity rate has more than doubled for preschool children aged 2-5 years and adolescents aged 12-19 years. It has more than tripled for children aged 6-11 years.

At present, approximately 9 million children over 6 years of age are considered obese.

In a population-based sample, approximately 60 percent of obese children aged 5 to 10 years had at least one cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk factor - such as elevated total cholesterol, triglycerides, insulin, or blood pressure - and about 25 percent had two or more risk CVD factors.

There's time to turn things around

Eating well and exercising can improve a young person's energy and mood, and allow for better rest and sleep patterns. Treating your body right will also improve your immune system, which helps you stay healthy and feeling well. Better fitness should give you a greater self-image.

For more information or to register your child for September's Take 2 pilot program, call Mark Hamman at 651-642-1825 or e-mail him at mwhamman@pediatrixhomeservice.com.