



DELAWARE MODERN PEDIATRICS, P.A.

David M. Epstein, M.D.

300 Biddle Avenue, Suite 206
Springside Plaza, Connor Building

Newark, Delaware 19702

Phone: (302) 392-2077

Fax: (302) 392 - 0020

www.DelawareModernPediatrics.com

Advice for Infants to Prevent Obesity

We are all concerned about the worsening epidemic of obesity in children. Here are some simple suggestions that may help combat our society's obesity-prone lifestyles.

- ✓ Encourage your baby to **trust his own appetite**. Feeding a baby on demand, regardless of the time since last feeding, can teach a baby to trust his own appetite. (Don't let him sleep too long during the day, though, or you may be up at night to make up the difference!) Try to avoid using pacifiers. Keeping a baby on a feeding schedule, regulating the feeding volume, or encouraging the baby to "finish" what is in front of him may give the message that the baby should expect someone else to tell him when, how much, and what to eat. Parents who battle with their older children about eating vegetables or clearing the plate may inadvertently be setting the kids up for an eating disorder.
- ✓ **Limit juice** to 6 or 8 ounces a day. In fact, fruit juice has little nutritional value, and is not necessary for infants. Fruit juice is mostly sugar (even fruit sugar) and water. This gives mainly "empty" calories, and it teaches kids to expect drinks to be sweet. The vitamins contained in juice are also contained in many other healthful foods that children eat. (If you wish to introduce juice, we recommend that juices not be started until 6 months.)
- ✓ **Limit television exposure** to 1 hour per day. Studies document that obesity risk doubles for children who are exposed to 2 hours per day of television, regardless of whether the kids are actually watching. Studies also document the link between the hours of TV that infants are exposed to, and their subsequent TV habits as schoolchildren. If infants learn to accept TV as part of their daily stimulation, it will be hard for them to turn it off later. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends against turning on TV for infants' benefit, even if the tape was specially made "for babies."
- ✓ Parents who **role model exercise** are encouraging their children to follow an active lifestyle. Exercise daily in front of, or with, your children. Take a "family walk" once a day. Try to take your baby outside as much as possible. (Don't forget the sunblock!)
- ✓ **Breastfeeding** has been shown to have a positive influence on reducing obesity.