

Are You Setting Your Kids Up for Obesity?

As you know, Sunday was Mother's Day, and you might have noticed that from sunup to sundown, Facebook and other social networking sites were being plastered with pictures of beloved moms and their doting children and sentimental sugar-sweet statuses counting blessings received and lessons learned from good ol' Mom.

No doubt most of you visited your mom with a card and flowers or called her up on the phone if she lives far away. And while you talked with her, you were likely reminded of all the selfless acts she's done for you, all the unconditional love she's shown you, the grace and forgiveness she's extended toward you, the tear-filled nights when she prayed with you, the mornings when she led you by the hand to your Sunday school classroom.

I got to thinking of some of the greatest ways in which my mom and dad have impacted my own life. After reflecting upon how marvelous their spiritual influence has been, the first thing I listed was their example of physical activity. I truly believe that the emphasis they placed on playing sports and spending time outdoors, their long, regular walks together, my mom's Proverbs 31-style arms (super-strong and never idle!) and my dad's nightly weightlifting sessions in the garage instilled in me the principles of health and fitness that I carry and share each day.

At our house, playing video games was kept to a minimum; TV was limited to an hour a night with the family (typically spent watching *Wheel of Fortune* and sitcoms like *Home Improvement*), and as for smartphones and iPads? Well, those weren't a problem because they didn't exist.

If you are leading a sedentary lifestyle and maintaining an unhealthy diet, it's important you realize that your choices are affecting more than just yourself. Here are a few ways how:

1. Children will watch more TV if you do. posted a study revealing that children are more likely to watch high levels of television if their parents do. The study found that higher parental TV viewing was associated with an increased risk of high levels of TV viewing for both boys and girls.

For girls, the relative risk of watching 4+ hours of TV per day was times higher if the girl's parent watched 2-4 hours of TV per day, when compared to girls who watched less than two hours of TV per day. For boys, the relative risk of watching 4+ hours of TV per day was times higher if the boy's parent watched more than four hours of TV per day, when compared to boys who watched less than two hours of TV per day.

Dr. Mike Knapton, associate medical director at the British Heart Foundation, succinctly said, "Parents and children rooted to the sofa watching over four hours of television each night paints a worrying picture of kids' daily habits."

2. Obese parents may have obese children. According to an article published by the University of Rochester Medical Center, obesity is the most common health problem facing children today. Twenty-two percent of children and teens are overweight, and over 15 percent are obese.

Studies of shown that children whose parents are overweight or obese are at higher risk for becoming obese themselves. The *Journal of Pediatrics*, for instance, identified five independent risk factors for childhood weight gain and obesity, the main one being parental weight.

Poor eating habits are often established during childhood, says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). More than 60 percent of young people eat too much fat, and

less than 20 percent eat the recommended five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day. By the time a child reaches adolescence, his or her obesity, rather than the parents' obesity, is the most important predictor of being obese in adulthood.

Nearly 65 percent of obese adolescents will still be obese as adults, even if neither parent is obese.

The activity level of children and teens has dropped. They spend much of their leisure time watching television, playing video games or using a computer, and, as a result, their weight has increased.

For children who are predisposed to gain weight, prevention is critical, says the CDC. Obesity increases the risk for other health problems, including Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, breast cancer, colon cancer, gall bladder disease and arthritis.

3. Our generation is the most sedentary. An analysis of studies on millions of children around the world finds they don't run as fast or as far as their parents did when they were young. On average, kids today take require 90 more seconds to run a mile than children did 30 years ago.

Grant Tomkinson, an exercise physiologist at the University of South Australia, led the new study. Researchers analyzed 50 studies on running fitness—a key measure of cardiovascular health and endurance—involving 25 million children ages 9 to 17 in 28 countries from 1964 to 2010.

The studies measured how far children could run in 5 to 15 minutes and how quickly they ran a certain distance, ranging from half a mile to two miles. The researchers concluded that today's kids are about 15 percent less fit than their parents were, researchers concluded.

Not surprising given these findings, heart-related fitness has

declined 5 percent per decade since 1975 for children ages 9 to 17.

“It makes sense,” says Dr. Stephen Daniels, a University of Colorado pediatrician and spokesman for the American Heart Association. “We have kids that are less active than before.”

Health experts recommend that children 6 and older get 60 minutes of moderately vigorous activity accumulated throughout each day. Today, only one-third of American kids meets that standard.

“Kids aren’t getting enough opportunities to build up that activity over the course of the day,” Daniels says. “Many schools, for economic reasons, don’t have any physical education at all. Some rely on recess [to provide exercise].”

While it’s true that schools have a role to play in educating students about the importance of health and ensuring that they receive plenty of physical exercise, ultimately the responsibility to inform, instruct, nurture and guide our nation’s children rests on parents. Through your example as a health-conscious mom or dad who strives to care for your body as a precious temple of the Holy Spirit, your children will learn to behave similarly. And they will rise up to call you blessed.

“She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed” (Prov. 31:27-28, KJV).

Stay fit, stay faithful.

Diana Anderson-Tyler is the author of *Creation House’s Fit for Faith: A Christian Woman’s Guide to Total Fitness* and her latest book, *Perfect Fit: Weekly Wisdom and Workouts for Women of Faith and Fitness*. Her popular website can be found at [www.dianataylor.com](#), and she is the owner and a coach at CrossFit 925. Diana can be reached on Twitter.

For the original article, visit .