

HEALTH

MOMS
CONNECT

Is your child's weight an issue? Find out what moms are doing to battle childhood obesity at www.jerseyshore.momslikeme.com.



STAFF PHOTOS BY MARY FRANK

Lynn Krachie, a kindergarten teacher at Turtle Creek Learning Academy in Marlboro, teaches children exercises they can do using a ball. The students, from left, are Rebecca Buonomo, Maddie Emmett, Marco Zucaro, Megan Liao and Katherine Fang. The school's curriculum includes lessons on fitness and healthy eating.

NO TIME TO 'WEIGHT'

Experts offer tips on combating childhood obesity

By SUSAN BLOOM
CORRESPONDENT

Dr. Paul Schwartzberg is adamant that "simple changes can make a big difference" when it comes to childhood obesity, and he and other local champions are taking on the challenge, one child at a time.

"Sadly, in many areas, access to nutritional foods is not as accessible as it is to fast foods," Schwartzberg, program director for pediatric residency at Jersey Shore University Medical Center in Neptune, said in regard to the contributing factors behind this trend. "It's difficult for people to make reasonable choices on food and portions in today's 'supersize' age, and people are often not educated on the concept of calories and how many calories certain foods contain."

Adria Magenheimer, a Colts Neck-based nutritionist, agrees that the type of food that children consume is a key culprit.

"The amount of processed food, sugar and corn syrup that kids eat today amounts to nothing but empty calories, from a nutritional perspective," she said.

"Combine this with the popularity of sedentary activities such as television and video games," Schwartzberg said, "and we have a concern of epidemic proportion."

Schwartzberg also noted that a genetic component often comes into play, with estimates revealing that children who have one obese parent stand a 50 percent chance of being obese themselves. This risk rises to 80 percent if both parents are obese.

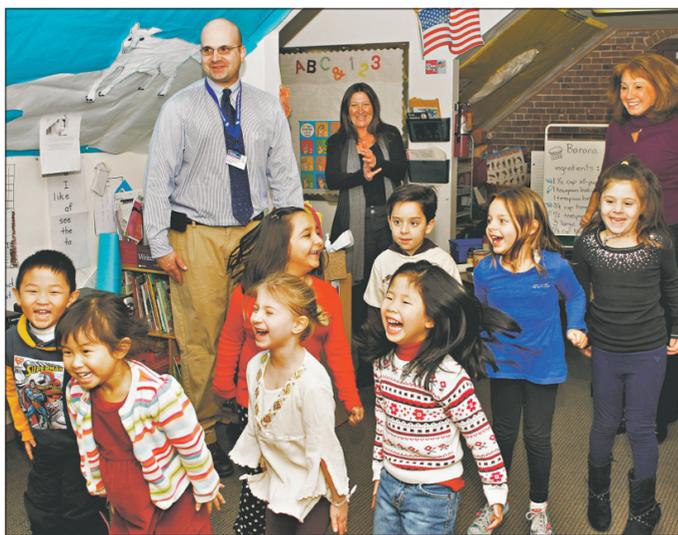
Time for a change

Schwartzberg is one of many who are striving to make a difference locally. As the medical director for the Neptune-based Let's Improve Fitness Together (LIFT) program, he regularly works with overweight and obese children and teens to help them establish more sound eating habits and activity levels.

Supported by staff physicians and nutritionists, the program teaches kids how to read food labels and calorie counts and promotes fun and easy ways to exercise both outside and indoors. The program also targets parents, who often need to be motivated and positively engaged themselves in order to lead their kids by example.

"The LIFT Program was developed to help instill positive lifestyle habits and to offer guidelines on what people could do on their own," Schwartzberg said. "It's a tool kit full of nutritional tips, exercises, and games designed to establish healthy habits today and keep kids motivated so they'll hopefully continue to pursue these fitness and nutrition ideals tomorrow."

Schwartzberg is not alone in his concern over childhood obesity trends or in his desire to help combat the issue. In Marlboro, Virginia



Dr. Paul Schwartzberg, program director for pediatric residency at Jersey Shore University Medical Center, watches as students jump while exercising. Teacher Lynn Krachie (center) and Virginia McDonald (right), the school's executive director and curriculum specialist, watch.



Kindergarten student Maddie Emmett (left) bounces a ball while Rebecca Buonomo watches.

McDonald, executive director of Turtle Creek Learning Academy, sees it as her school's obligation to help children and their parents make healthier choices.

"For the first time in history, it's predicted that this generation of kids will not have the longevity that their parents do based on their eating habits and lifestyle," she said, "and it's estimated that a staggering one in three children born in 2000 will be Type 2 diabetic."

"The statistics on childhood obesity require all of us to get our heads out of the sand. As a nation, we owe our kids better," she said.

For her part, she has devoted a significant chunk of Turtle Creek's curriculum to lessons on physical activity, nutrition and healthy

THE FACTS

■ According to the National Institutes of Health, more than 65 percent of Americans are either overweight or obese, indicating that they have a Body Mass Index (BMI) exceeding 25 or weigh at least 20 percent more than the ideal for their height, gender and age.

■ The American Academy for Childhood & Adolescent Psychiatry recently reported that the annual cost to society for obesity is estimated at nearly \$100 billion, double its level a decade ago, and that unhealthy weight gain due to poor diet and lack of exercise is responsible for more than 300,000 deaths each year, positioning obesity dangerously near tobacco as the leading most preventable cause of death in the U.S.

■ Afflicting mostly adults in the past, obesity now is becoming a growing epidemic among our nation's youngest constituents, with an estimated 16 to 33 percent of American children and teenagers either overweight or obese.

■ The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention confirms that childhood obesity has more than tripled in the past 30 years.

COMING TOMORROW

Learn more about feeding children healthy meals, and find several recipes, in tomorrow's Taste! section.

Memory loss linked to cholesterol drug

Q. My doctor prescribed Vytorin for high cholesterol. While my cholesterol went from over 350 to 190 in five weeks, I ended up having an eight-hour episode of transient global amnesia (TGA).

I knew who I was, and I recognized my family and friends, but I didn't know the year. I didn't recognize streets I have driven for many years. I asked my husband the same five questions in the hospital over and over until late in the evening, when my memory returned.

I read on spacedoc.net about a man who had the same experience while on Lipitor. "Spacedoc" is a retired astronaut and doctor.

I immediately went off Vytorin. I don't want high cholesterol, but I do want to remember where I live. I'd like to try something else for controlling my cholesterol. Do you have any ideas?

A. We have heard from many other readers who have experienced memory problems on statin-type cholesterol-lowering drugs. Vytorin contains simvastatin.

Some have shared similar stories of TGA. One man forgot how to shift his sports car into gear. Another forgot the route to work.

Several other kinds of medicines may help in your quest to control cholesterol. Ask your doctor about psyllium, niacin, fish oil, fibrates and bile acid binders. One or more may help solve the problem.

Q. I read your response to a reader with blepharitis who suggested T/Gel was helpful. You mentioned there is no study of this treatment.

While I can't offer any scientific study, I can offer

PEOPLE'S PHARMACY



By Joe Graedon & Teresa Graedon

another data point for the method. My physician diagnosed blepharitis and recommended applying T/Gel in the shower every night.

It not only has been 100 percent effective in treating the problem, but also efficient. I have used only 40 percent of the 4.4 ounce bottle during four years of treatment.

A. Blepharitis is a medical term for inflammation of the eyelid. Symptoms may include itching, redness, flaking and crusting on the edge of the eyelid.

You are not the only one to find dandruff shampoo helpful. We recently heard from another reader: "Not only does Selsun Blue shampoo control my blepharitis, it's the only thing that works. I apply the foam to the eyelids for about 15 seconds each shower to knock out the itching and redness."

"I tried prescription medication from my doctor, and it made my lids goopy and clouded my vision. I have to use the shampoo on a regular basis or the blepharitis comes back, but it does work."

Dandruff shampoos have antifungal activity, which may explain why they work. Be sure to keep all shampoo out of the eyes!

Write to the Graedons via their website, www.PeoplesPharmacy.com.

Seafood diet could keep vision loss at bay

By MARY BROPHY MARCUS
USA TODAY

Dishing up fish and shellfish more often at meals could help some older adults protect their eyesight longer.

Eating more seafood rich in omega-3 fatty acids — such as oysters, crabs and tuna — appears to slow advanced macular degeneration, a common cause of age-related blindness, according to new research published in this month's Ophthalmology.

The findings are consistent with previous research suggesting omega-3 supplements and omega-rich diets protect vision in some people, says study author Bonnielin Swenor of the Wilmer Eye Institute at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine.

"Our study shows a dietary effect, that people who had the highest weekly intake of fish and shellfish high in omega-3 fatty acids were significantly less likely to have advanced disease," Swenor says.

The observational study included 2,390 participants ages 65 to 84 on Maryland's Eastern Shore. They were asked to complete a questionnaire about diet habits in the previous year, including how much fish and shellfish they ate. Then they were evaluated for macular degeneration.

Although all of the participants averaged at least one serving of fish or shellfish a week, 68 people who had advanced macular degeneration, including blood vessel problems and atrophy in the retina, were significantly less likely to consume high omega-3 fish and seafoods.

That suggests a fish-



rich diet helps vision, Swenor says. Another 153 had intermediate-stage disease and 227 had early stages, while 1,942 had no macular degeneration.

"It's an important piece of evidence in the omega-3 story," says Steven Schwartz, Ahmanson professor of ophthalmology at UCLA's Jules Stein Eye Institute. "It's biologically plausible that the protective effect is from the omega-3s, but it's important to keep in mind that there are potentially other factors at play — genetics, environment and unknowns."

"The fact that it's consistent with other published reports makes it more credible," Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary retina specialist Ivana Kim says. She cautions that the small percentage of people in the study with advanced disease (3 percent) may lead to false conclusions.

Nixing tobacco, controlling blood pressure, eating leafy green veggies and nuts and seeing a retina specialist if you've already been diagnosed with macular degeneration are other lifestyle recommendations Schwartz says he offers patients. He cautions against self-dosing with omega-3 supplements, though.

"We don't recommend patients go out on their own and supplement like crazy. Talk with your ophthalmologist and get a personalized plan," Schwartz says.