

Your Child's Heart Health

When we hear information on heart disease, children are usually not the first thing that comes to mind. Research in the last 40 years has shown heart disease begins early in life and continues as we get older. Although genetics plays a role, lifestyle choices are very important in preventing the development of heart disease.

Keep your child heart-healthy by helping him or her:

Choose a healthy diet (small changes can equal big benefits)

- Eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables daily
- Eat foods low in saturated fat and cholesterol
- Choose low-fat dairy products (skim or 1% milk, low-fat yogurt and cheeses)
- Bake, grill or roast meats instead of frying
- Include 2 servings of fish per week
- Choose whole grain/high fiber breads and cereals

Get moving

Health experts recommend at least 60 minutes of physical activity for children and adolescents each day. Physical activity increases life expectancy and decreases risks for heart disease. Activity is also linked with overall physical, psychological and social benefits including:

- Controlling weight
- Reducing blood pressure
- Raising HDL (good) cholesterol
- Reducing the risk of diabetes and some kinds of cancer
- Increasing self-confidence and boosting self-esteem

Physical activity should be increased by reducing sedentary time, such as watching TV, playing video games, talking on the phone or spending time on the computer. Help vary activities (keep it fun), provide encouragement and serve as a positive role model to increase your child's activity level.

Healthy Recipe: English Muffin Pizza

whole-grain English muffins
shredded low-fat mozzarella cheese
veggie toppings such as fresh tomatoes, mushrooms,
onions, peppers, etc.
lean ground beef (optional)

Split English muffins in half and place on cookie sheet.
Spread 1/3 cup or less cheese on each muffin half and add
desired toppings. Bake at 350 degrees for 5-10 minutes or
until cheese is golden brown.

Heart-healthy Activity

Inactivity is a major risk factor for developing heart disease. This month, get outdoors for some sledding! Climbing back up the hills for another run gets the heart pumping. For indoor activities, go for a walk in the mall or try swimming, playing basket ball or jumping rope in a community center. Enrolling your child in a martial arts class is another way to help him or her meet activity recommendations.

Mercy Children's Center provides pediatric services to children of all ages, from infants to teenagers. Services offered include: pediatric clinics, dedicated emergency and trauma services, specialists, inpatient and intensive care, neonatal intensive care, rehabilitation and behavioral health. For more information, contact Mercy Children's Center at 1-888-882-4122 or by visiting www.mercydesmoines.org.

