

# FANTASTIC FITNESS

A Newspaper In  
Education Series #1

## Take it From the Top



The top of your head is where your brain sits, and that's where fantastic fitness begins. To make good decisions, you need to know what is healthy for your body. This section will help you become more informed about the issues involved in good health.

### **News Flash: The Problem of Childhood Obesity**

The problem of obesity is widespread because many people do not eat healthy foods or exercise enough. Obese people have too much body fat. Put simply, too many people eat too much and move too little. That means that people who weigh too much take in more energy from food – called calories – than their bodies use. But obesity is more than just being overweight. People who are obese usually weigh 20 percent or more than the recommended weight for their height and body type.

Obesity is dangerous. It increases the risk of heart disease and it can cause high blood pressure, diabetes, gallstones, breathing problems, trouble sleeping, and emotional problems such as poor self-esteem. In fact, obesity is closing in on tobacco as the No. 1 preventable cause of death in America today, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Obesity is a problem for children and young adults too. Between 16 percent and 33 percent of children and adolescents in America – more than 9 million young people – are obese. Because of that, kids are now getting diseases that used to affect only adults. There are lots of things that kids want to rush into as they grow up, but grownup illnesses are not among them. It's a serious problem because today's kids (and that means you!) are tomorrow's leaders. We need tomorrow's leaders to be strong and healthy. You might say that today's eaters are tomorrow's leaders. Did what you ate yesterday prepare you for greatness tomorrow?

Don't worry. There's plenty of time to make changes. You have the power to choose good health starting now. Although obesity has some physical causes, such as medical illness or medications (and children with one or more obese parents are more likely to be obese themselves), the biggest causes of obesity are poor diet and lack of exercise. Those are things you can do something about. If you are worried that you may be obese, consider seeing a doctor to talk about making healthy choices. If someone you know is obese, you might suggest that person get advice from a doctor. You can also pass along tips that you learn from reading this section.



*Learning standards:  
compiling data, summarizing, skimming*

1. The news often includes stories of health issues and problems. Skim today's newspaper for one such story. Summarize it and circle the words that you think are most important.
2. How frequently does a healthy heart beat? You can measure your own heart-beat or another person's. First, find the pulse point on the inside of either wrist. (Don't use your thumb because the thumb has its own pulse point.) Count the beats in 10 seconds and multiply that number by 6 to compute the number of beats per minute.
3. One activity that helps build a healthy heart is playing a sport. Turn to the Sports section in the newspaper. Create some health-related math problems using the statistics in the Sports section. Exchange problems with a partner and solve each other's.

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