

Motion Performance Chiropractic

I'm sure many of you are NFL fans. And I know you watch your favorite team play every week, even if they aren't doing as hot as was anticipated. I want to comment on the program the NFL is promoting right now called "Kids Play 60." I think this is a great plan.

The program is designed to get kids out and moving for at least 60 minutes each day. Kids are challenged to do some sort of athletic or active activity. It is designed to help fight childhood obesity, which is a huge problem in this country. One that I think we will not see the true effects until decades from now. I am preaching to the choir a little bit here, as I know our patients are very active, and model active lives for their children. In fact I've had numerous conversations about dietary and exercise/activity standards that you hold your children to. But, I think the NFL has helped raise some increased awareness for something that I am passionate about.

Let's take a quick look at childhood obesity in the United States.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) obesity levels in kids age 6-19 has tripled since 1980, and is now at 16%. Another 15% of those kids are at risk to becoming overweight. Think about that – 30% of our kids are, or are at risk of being, overweight! Even preschool children, age 2-5, have double their obesity rating in the last thirty years. These overweight kids have a 70% chance of being overweight adults. Annual hospital costs for overweight children have gone from \$35 million from 1979-81, to \$127 million in 1997-99.

This is simply not fair to the kids. Pre-schoolers do not have much of a say as to what they eat. It's the responsibility of the parents to make good food choices for them. Nearly one-third of children in the United States age 4-19 eat fast food every day. EVERY DAY! This results in about 6 pounds of extra weight each year for each kid. 60% of these obese children have at least one risk factor for cardiovascular disease as children. And it is now estimated that children born in 2000 have at least a 30% risk of being diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes in their lives. Girls of that group have a 40% risk. These are serious numbers that have long term drastic effects on people's lives.

Lack of exercise and diet are the main reasons children suffer from obesity.

Children don't necessarily have a choice in the foods that they eat. Unless they are taught they never learn about foods and the importance of good food. Instead they learn that meals can be gotten quickly, at a convenience store or fast food shop. Eating becomes an inconvenience to children instead of a means to vitality. They grow up without even an understanding that the food that they put into their bodies actually becomes part of their bodies.

Motion Performance Chiropractic

Kids simply do not get enough exercise. In school we force children to sit in a chair starting at the age of 5 for the majority of their day. And we sit until we are 18 years old at least! That doesn't even include college classes. Yes I know that kids get physical education each week – sometimes every day at school, and that's great. National recommendations are 150 minutes of physical activity each week for elementary children and 225 minutes for older children. Illinois is the only state to have requirements for daily physical education. NFL Play 60 would give kids 420 minutes each week. Imagine that!

So before (or I guess after) I go on and on about childhood obesity, I would like to reiterate that I love the NFL's program. They are truly giving a valuable lesson to children that will carry over in the generations to come. So hat's off to the NFL.

What can you do? The first thing to do is model good, healthy behavior. If you exercise for 60 minutes every day (or every other day), your children will do their best to mimic that. If you make healthy food choices and do not eat fast food every day they will know that also. Also talk to your kids about food. Explain that the apple they eat becomes animated and integrated into their bodies. It's a neat concept (even for me still) when you think about it. *Think globally, act locally.*

Here are some other programs that try to fight childhood obesity: Karno Kids, Shape-up America, National Institute for Health Care Management Foundation (NIHCM), Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), Kidstrong.