



**It's
Time to
Slay the Beast Of
Childhood Obesity**

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Denise Nero lives in Mentor, Ohio with her wonderful children and has been in the health and fitness industry for four years. In 2001, she became a certified personal fitness trainer.

Since the epidemic of obesity is on the rise, her passion is helping kids learn about fitness. She believes that most parents do not really understand what the types of food and lack of exercise are doing to our kids and their futures.

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Chapter 1

Understanding the Importance of Proper Nutrition and Fitness

Childhood Obesity afflicts one out of every four children. And as alarming as this number is, unless immediate steps are taken, things will get worse. There are many causes of Childhood Obesity, but the good news is that, we, as parents and educators, can do something about it. It is not too late – though time is running short. It begins with something as simple and traditional as Family Meals.

Most of us have fond memories of gathering around the dinner table for an evening of conversation, while sitting down to a delicious and nutritious home-cooked meal. Dinner times weren't just about the food – they were about sharing our daily triumphs as well as our defeats. They were about bonding, growing as a family and passing down traditions and values.

But with today's hectic lifestyles, things are different! The biggest complaint most married adults have is that there simply aren't enough hours in the day. In fact, in over half of today's families, both parents work. They juggle kids, career, extra curricular activities, and home; leaving very little time for quality meals. We all know that something has to give, but all too often, that "something" is home-cooked and nutritious meals.



Our children are already getting clogged arteries!

Childhood Obesity is now affecting 1 in 4 children, and according to Dr. Dean Ornish of "Dr. Dean Ornish's Program for Reversing Heart Disease," young children are already developing blockages in their arteries, due to the American Diet. And this trend will continue to get worse if we as parents and educators don't start to do something about it and fast.

Family meals are lacking in many nutritious deficiencies. Pre-packaged foods lose a lot of nutritional value in the process, as we look for the fastest way to prepare a meal. But, with the limited time parents have these days, fast food restaurants and pre-packaged meals seem the only alternative.

But childhood obesity doesn't stop with improper eating habits; children are far less active today, than years ago. Without physical activity, our bodies cannot burn off the fat that is stored in many food products. When our bodies do not burn the extra fat, through "activity," our bodies will store the fat, causing obesity.

What do your children spend most of their time doing?

Spend a Saturday just watching your child. How many times has your child gotten up to play a game that involved a physical activity, such as skating, football, or basketball? How much of that day is spent playing video games, watching television, or playing on the computer? It is very important that our children get at the very minimum, one hour of physical activity a day.

Even if your child is not overweight, it doesn't mean that those arteries are not becoming blocked because of poor food choices, or that proper nutrition is not needed. A recent study has shown that kids do not get nearly the recommended servings of fruits and vegetable per day, nor do they get the minimum required amount of exercise to keep their hearts healthy and strong. Proper nutrition and physical activity are essential elements for good health. And, good health means a happier, more productive child.

But, our children are not the only ones who need help. American adults are way out of shape and rapidly gaining weight due to improper nutrition and lack of proper exercise. How many times have you stopped off to order a meal at your favorite fast food restaurant and then asked for it to be super-sized? How many times have you come home from a long day of work, to exercise or play a physical activity with your child?

Healthy lifestyles start in the home!

If we want our children to eat healthy and be more active, then we must set the example. First, let's take a look at the typical eating habits of most Americans. Then, we'll provide you with a remedy.

Fast Food

Eating fast food more than once a week. Instead of stopping by a fast food restaurant because you don't have the time to prepare a homemade meal, use a crock-pot. Prepare the meal before you leave for work, then allow the crock-pot to cook your meal while you are away at work.

Pre-packaged Foods

Pre-packaged, ready to serve highly processed foods. Such as frozen dinners, chicken patties, macaroni and cheese, hot pockets, frozen pizzas, and more. Instead of purchasing pre-packaged meals, take one day a week to cook an entire week's worth of meals. Then freeze those meals. On the day that you are to eat that meal, place the frozen meal in the refrigerator so that when you come home from work, all you have to do is place in another dish and reheat.

Junk Food

Junk food – How many cookies, chips and other snacks are readily available for you and your family to eat? Junk food and snacks should be limited to no more than one small snack size baggie a day. If your