



NEWS RELEASE

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Family New Year's resolution keeps families healthy and fit

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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This year why not try an idea to help those close to you keep their New Year's resolution? It's called the Family New Year's resolution and it will inspire your family to eat smarter and live healthier.

In a time when most Americans are not leading healthy lives, this type of resolution is needed. U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher recently released a report calling for action to prevent and decrease obesity and being overweight, the most pressing health challenge that Americans face today. Obesity among adults has doubled since 1980, and the Surgeon General reports that approximately 300,000 deaths a year are associated with obesity and being overweight.

This problem is not limited to adults either. American children are becoming alarmingly overweight resulting in an increase in such conditions as asthma and type 2 diabetes among them. The reasons attributed to this added weight in children are that they are spending too much time watching television and playing computer games coupled with busy parents utilizing fast food to feed their families.

Families can begin the process of living healthier this year by making a joint resolution to change their lifestyles. With the entire family involved each member can help support one another and encourage each other to stick to the resolution.

"By making a family New Year's resolution everyone can participate. When the whole family is involved, it becomes much easier for healthy food selections and increased physical activity to become part of the routine," states Miriam Gaines, LRD, MACT, director of the Nutrition and Physical Activity Unit of the Alabama Department of Public Health.

Only 3 percent of Americans meet their intake of at least four of the five Food Guide Pyramid recommendations of grains, fruits, vegetables, dairy products and meats. Americans also do not maintain enough healthy physical activity. Less than one-third of adults meet the federal recommendations of engaging in at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity at least five days a week.

"The family New Year's resolution should center activities around the outdoors, for example, hiking or bike riding. This allows families to spend time together as well as get the physical activity that they need to maintain a healthy lifestyle," states Gaines.

According to the Surgeon General, failure of Americans to address the problem of obesity could result in wiping out gains made in areas such as heart disease, several forms of cancer and other chronic health problems.

The following tips are recommended for maintaining a healthier life:

- * Eat foods that are low in fat and calories, making more selections from vegetables, fruits, whole-grains and low-fat or non-dairy products.
- * Increase physical activity by reducing time spent watching television and other sedentary behavior.
- * Avoid unhealthy activities such as excessive drinking and smoking.
- * Find a method to reduce stress that does not include food, such as walking, reading a good book, or soaking in a bath.
- * Change your perception of healthy living by focusing on health choices and not personal appearance.

Gaines also recommends making changes one at a time. "Making too many big changes can lead to frustration and results in giving up. Focus on important but small changes that will add positive benefits." With the family support the changes will soon become a healthy way of life.

For more information on nutrition and physical activity, visit the Alabama Department of Public Health website at www.adph.org