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Transforming your life, one idea at a time...

DEAR MOM, I'M FAT. PLEASE HELP. LOVE, YOUR CHILD.

by Cheri J. Najor, CSW, CPT

You've heard the chilling statistics time and time again. Our children are in the fight for their lives. In the last three decades, the rate of childhood obesity has tripled. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) this translates to nearly 9 million children in the United States alone being labeled as "fat."

What's more shocking is that our little ones, ranging in ages from 2-5, are now being diagnosed more than ever with Type 2 Diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. Throw in the stigma and shame of being overweight, and the call to action is clear: Do something. Anything. But whatever you do, do it now.

Feeling overwhelmed? Don't. Here are some easy ideas to take control of your child's future and firmly – and forever -- put your family on the road to lifelong health:

Toss the Trans Fats: Leading health experts refer to trans fats as the "silent killer". This man-made fat is found in a wide variety of foods, such as bread, crackers, butter, margarine, cookies, candy, breakfast bars and virtually all fast food. What to do: Take the time to read the label on every food you buy for your children. If you find the words, "Partially hydrogenated" listed in the ingredients, put the item back on the shelf. Then give a really disgusted look so the parent next to you will wonder what all the fuss is about.

Say so long to sodas. Do your kids routinely drink sugary sodas with meals? Say "so long" to excess calories that add absolutely no nutritional value to your child's diet. Switch to something else...anything else! Serve low fat milk, diluted fruit juice or <gasp> water with your kids' meals instead.



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Sneak in smart snacks. Serving your child small snacks between meals is one of the best investments you can make in their education and their health! A proper balance of protein, carbohydrates and fats keeps your child's energy at optimal levels throughout the day by helping their bodies maintain even insulin levels.

The key is to institute the "no toe" rule. No Cheetoes, Fritos, Doritos. Say goodbye to chips, candy, cookies, crackers and anything with an "its" at the end its name. Instead, fuel your child's brain for learning by serving healthier snack foods like raisins, string cheese, peanut butter, 100-percent fruit spreads, fresh fruits or raw vegetables with dip and whole grain crackers.

Break out the "brain food" for Breakfast! You've heard it a million times – "breakfast is the most important meal of the day." If this is true, you might be wondering, "what kind of breakfast is the best for my child?" The answer to that is simple – one that doesn't contain any processed sugar!

If you want your child to learn, their brain needs the proper fuel. And that fuel is not found in high-sugar cereals with cute cartoon characters on the box. The best breakfast is created by you – by consciously choosing foods with the right amount of protein, complex carbohydrates and fat to properly fuel your child's brain to do what it wants to do... LEARN!

Here are some simple suggestions for a power breakfast that feeds your child's brain for optimal performance:

- Top a whole grain waffle or pancake with fruit yogurt or peanut butter instead of syrup
- Melt a slice of low-fat cheese on a whole grain waffle, bagel or French toast
- Wrap a whole-grain waffle, tortilla or lavash around cooked turkey sausage
- Serve oatmeal with milk, cinnamon, raisins and some nuts
- Batch French toast on whole grain bread and serve with yogurt and fresh fruit



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Don't Forget Your Flax. Ground flax seeds and flax oil are a rich source of essential omega-3 fatty acids. Unfortunately, most children (and adults) are deficient in this critical nutrient that can only be supplied by food. Omega 3's are crucial for optimal brain and nerve function and have been shown to reduce the incidence of cancer.

How do you make sure your child gets enough Omega 3's? Simple. Go to Whole Foods Market and buy a small bottle of flax seed oil. Keep it in your refrigerator and measure out a teaspoon per day. Stir it in yogurt or peanut butter. Use it in place of butter on toast or bread, drizzle a little on pasta (under the spaghetti sauce) or sprinkle some on your child's popcorn while you watch a movie together. This oil becomes toxic when heated, so however you sneak it into their diet, keep the oil cold.

Finding creative ways to sneak healthy foods into your child's diet is a fun and empowering way to take control of your child's future – without a fight. By making smart and conscious choices about the food we prepare, we declare, through our actions, that they are worth the effort.

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Cheri J. Najor, CSW, CPT is a Michigan-based corporate trainer, professional speaker, licensed therapist and owner and founder of Kreativ Energy, a training and consulting company that specializes in helping people and organizations thrive during challenging and changing times. For over 20 years, her professional and personal growth services have helped thousands Just Say Yes!™ to a powerful mindset that enables them to become better leaders, create healthier relationships, and achieve extraordinary results. Cheri can be reached at: cheri@kreativnrg.com, or Cheri@LittleMissPositive.com; Office: 1-248-592-1203, or visit her website at <http://www.kreativnrg.com>