

Physical Activity Can Lead To Healthy Kids

(KAIR)--Getting kids to be more physically active and thus, healthier, could be as simple as putting them outdoors to play.

According to 2012 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention statistics, more than a third of children and adolescents were overweight or obese. Professor of physical activity and Public Health at Kansas State University David Dzewaltowski says the more time children spend outdoors, the more active they can be, and that the environment can influence physical activity. He adds that “if you think about a child being indoors in a small room with TVs or video games around, that environment will basically provide them with some options, and those options are mostly sedentary. So one way to get kids to have physical activity options is to just put them outside. Because if they are outside, that environment provides the opportunity for physical activity.”

Dzewaltowski says getting children outdoors is more important than having a play area with fancy equipment. In the past, the focus was on getting fancy playgrounds...spending a lot of money on equipment. However, Dzewaltowski says that “we are now starting to realize that just letting kids get out in nature...climb on rocks, and trees, and play with dirt...is a very engaging activity that kids like to do...In some cases, I think when we design some of these playgrounds, we have taken the fun out of it. We are so concerned about safety, that the playgrounds aren't challenging.”

One of the challenges now, compared to thirty years ago, is all of the very attractive sedentary options kids have. Dzewaltowski says that utilizing these options too much can impact the amount of time children are physically active. He recommends that in the child's bedroom, don't have toys that are sedentary....get those types of toys out. In the house, try to set up a play area where you are comfortable with the children moving around and getting physically active.

More information on promoting physical activity and preventing childhood obesity is available at county and district Extension offices, and on the Extension website ksre.ksu.edu.

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