

Tackling.. OBESITY

With childhood obesity soaring, the HSE is leading the charge in tackling this growing problem, with a number of initiatives taking place around the country.



BEING overweight or obese is one of the biggest things affecting our children's health, with the worrying emergence of pre-diabetes, type 2 diabetes, hypertension and sleep apnoea in the young.

Obesity has also been shown to impact on children's mental well-being and personal relationships. Overweight and obesity furthermore increase children's risk to developing heart and other chronic diseases in adulthood.

So what can parents do if they feel their child might be at risk and would benefit from healthier habits and increased activity?

Two HSE initiatives are battling to turn the tide and make the healthy choice the easy choice and supporting parents in their efforts.

In the Mid West region, the HSE together with the Limerick Sports Partnership are running a 9 week physical activity and lifestyle awareness programme for 9-12 year old overweight children in the Limerick area. The programme, called 'Way To Go Kids', aims to stop and reverse increasing weight gain in children, through a healthy and fun approach to nutrition and physical activity for kids.

While in the North East, Cavan Monaghan Healthy Families is a joint initiative involving a number of local agencies, including the HSE Dublin North East, Border Counties Childhood Network (BCCN), Monaghan Integrated Development, Cavan and Monaghan Sports Partnerships and the County Childcare Committees, who will work together to promote healthier lifestyles.

The initiative aims to prevent and manage childhood obesity by providing parents and guardians with the skills and knowledge to provide healthier eating options for their families.

Launching the programme in Limerick, Niamh Briggs, fullback with the Ireland women's national rugby union team and who was named as Female Player of the Year 2014 at The Rugby Writers of Ireland awards, said, "I am delighted to be associated with this programme as it highlights the advantages of a healthy and active lifestyle for kids showing them and their families how physical activity can be fun."

This programme, which has been run previously, has been welcomed by families looking to make the first step towards a healthier future. Over the nine weeks, parents and children will be provided with the advice, ideas and support to achieve this. Sports Development Workers, nutritionists and dieticians have developed fun-filled and informative sessions that engage, challenge and empower parents and children to make small lifestyle changes that offer great benefits.

Bedelia Collins, Senior Health Promotion Officer, HSE Mid West said, "This is an excellent programme for parents and kids to get involved in. It is designed to be practical but fun and is full of great ideas and tips for a healthier lifestyle. Childhood obesity is an issue and without action our children are vulnerable to problems with bone health and diseases like type 2 diabetes and heart disease."

Pheilim Macken of Limerick Local Sports Partnership said he was delighted to be involved in bringing another Way to Go Kids programme to Limerick.

"This is a great opportunity to show that there are lots of choices available to the whole family to get moving to enhance their quality of life."

In a world where childhood obesity is having such a harmful effect on growth and development and is a major contributor to ill-health and disease, this is a positive step that families can take.

Further information on the programme is available at <http://www.limericksports.ie/>

CAVAN MONAGHAN HEALTH FAMILY INITIATIVE

THE Cavan Monaghan Health Family initiative aims to prevent and manage childhood obesity by providing parents and guardians with the skills and knowledge to provide healthier eating options for their families. It also focuses on engaging children in enjoyable physical activities and looking after their emotional well-being.

It has two programmes aimed at promoting and maintaining healthier lifestyles, the Prevention Programme and the Management Programme.

The Prevention Programme is aimed at expectant parents and the new parents or guardians of children aged from 0-5 years.

It involves attending four weekly sessions with a mixture of fun activities based on healthy eating, cooking, confidence building, play and active games with motivational incentives for participant families.

The programme will be held in venues in Monaghan Town, Clones, Castleblayney, Cavan Town, Virginia and Ballyconnell. It is free of charge and open to all families meeting the criteria.

The Management Programme is aimed at children aged 8-11, who are obese or are at risk of becoming obese. It involves attending eight weekly group sessions with other children and families. These sessions are a mixture of fun activities based on healthy eating, cooking, confidence building, play and active games with motivational incentives for participant families.

The programmes are free and open to families in the Cavan Monaghan area. It will be held in both Cavan town and Monaghan town, commencing shortly. See www.hse.ie for further information.



MAIN PHOTO: At the launch of the way to go kids programme were Leanne Cole (Lisnagry), Pheilim Macken (Limerick Sports Partnership), Adam Murrhy (Lisnagry) and Irish rugby star Niamh Briggs.