



Calories in > Calories out = Trouble

It is well-known that there's an obesity epidemic going on, and it seems fitting to discuss this since we are fast-approaching the major eating holidays of the year.

Diseases that used to affect only adults are now being seen in children with increasing regularity because of the rise of obesity rates in children. Your neighbor, friend, or relative who is overweight or obese will very likely be diagnosed with diabetes, high cholesterol, or hypertension and heart disease even though they are children.

We shouldn't really wonder why this is occurring. It's a much simpler problem than what it's made out to be. It's a matter of calories in, versus calories out. Put another way, there's an imbalance in the equation and more calories going in than those burned off, results in weight gain.

Our children are constantly processing messages from advertisers to consume products and food. This push to consume wouldn't be so bad if there were an equal and opposite push to burn off calories. Unfortunately, schools have cut funding for PE, young people spend more time watching TV, texting, and surfing the net than ever, nobody walks, and we all look for the closest parking space we can find.

Obesity is an active area of research. For example, we now know about a hormone called ghrelin that is secreted by the stomach. This substance suppresses the appetite and makes us feel full when it gets to the brain. Unfortunately, it takes about 20 minutes for it to get from the stomach to the brain. That time delay is important to understand for those who eat meals quickly. Children are notoriously fast eaters.

This can easily be applied to your life and the life of your family. By serving appetizers about a half hour before meals for your family, you will see a reduction in the total number of calories consumed. This is simply because you're taking advantage of the time delay we just talked about.

Other simple steps are to take the stairs when possible, get screens (TV, Computer) out of children's bedrooms, and

park your car at the first parking spot you see - even though it might not be the one closest to the store entrance.

Your pediatrician should be able to help develop a plan for your child that balances calories and exercise to fit with your family's lifestyle.

Discovery Pediatrics, Inc. is a full-service pediatric office different from any you've ever experienced. Check out [www.DiscoveryPeds.com](http://www.DiscoveryPeds.com) or call 661-259-8999.