



## AAP News Parent Plus

INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

### Cholesterol screening in childhood can prevent health issues later

Heart disease and stroke may seem like adult problems, but they have their roots in childhood. Children who have unhealthy habits can face high cholesterol in adulthood, increasing their risk for cardiovascular disease.

To reduce the risk, experts recommend screening all children between the ages of 9 and 11 for high cholesterol and again between ages 17 and 21. Previously, cholesterol screening was recommended only when a family had a history of high cholesterol or heart disease.

The American Academy of Pediatrics supports screening children and offers the following tips for parents:

- **Start off healthy.** To ensure optimal nutrition, growth, development and health, infants should be breastfed without other foods for about the first six months of life and as often as possible until at least 12 months of age.
- **Eat the rainbow.** Between 12-23 months, infants should be transitioned to reduced fat milk (2%, 1% or skim), as recommended by their pediatrician. They also should be offered vegetables, fruits, whole grains, fat-free or low-fat milk products, and proteins such as lean meat, poultry, fish, beans, eggs and nuts.



- **Get moving.** Infants and young children should get plenty of active play, with limited time spent in infant seats, swings, strollers and playpens. Children ages 5-17 years should get at least one hour of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day. Vigorous physical activity is advised at least three days per week. Older teens and adults should lead physically active lives, with at least three days and a minimum of 75 minutes of vigorous activity or 2.5 hours of moderate activity a week.
- **Be one with nature.** Caregivers should encourage children to play outdoors.
- **Don't smoke.** Smoking and secondhand smoke exposure should be avoided.

Families are encouraged to make changes together, cut television and other screen time, eat a healthy diet and make exercise a regular part of life.

— Trisha Koriath

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