

Well on your Weigh

Like a lot of kids his age, Kenny Fulcher didn't have the healthiest of diets. It was often fast food and sodas for dinner or hearty steaks cooked on the family grill. What wasn't regularly on the menu were proper portions or healthy vegetables.

His mother, Robin, began worrying about his health after noticing his sizeable weight gain and expanding waist size. By age 12, he was five-feet, three-inches tall and 197 pounds. He had also begun developing dark patches around his neck, a telltale sign of diabetes. A yearly physical confirmed his mother's fears: Kenny was diagnosed with obesity, as well as high cholesterol and borderline diabetes.

His family physician referred Kenny to Cape Fear Valley's new Well on your Weigh program. The childhood weight loss program launched in April, and offers comprehensive care to its young patients.

Well on your Weigh focuses on weight control and lifestyle changes and works in conjunction with Cape Fear Valley Pediatric Endocrinology. The program is led by Tahmida Jahangir, M.D., a board-certified pediatrician, and has access to a team of health professionals including a dietitian, patient educator and pediatric endocrinologist.

Patients are often referred by pediatricians or primary care providers, but can also be referred by school nurses, guidance counselors, or even parents. This program is covered by Medicaid, Tricare and most private insurance plans.

New patients are given initial assessments that include a medical history and a physical with appropriate lab tests.

Patients are then screened for everything from diabetes and high blood pressure to a variety of underlying medical problems. The program's team works with the patient on nutrition education and physical activity goals laid out in a personalized treatment plan.

Total family involvement is encouraged, so Dr. Jahangir meets with every family member to learn the family's history of obesity, eating habits, exercise routines and leisure activities.



"We want to make sure both the child and parents understand what's at stake," Dr. Jahangir said. "I try to explain to them that it's important to modify the entire family lifestyle."

That includes cutting out excess carbs and fats from family meals, drinking water instead of sweet drinks, and getting at least one hour of physical activity a day.

The advice has helped many of Dr. Jahangir's patients lose noticeable weight in three months or less.

Statistics show that nearly one in five children between ages 2 and 19 are obese. It's the result of childhood obesity almost tripling in the U.S. in the past 30 years, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In North Carolina, one in three children ages 10 to 17 are diagnosed as overweight or obese. That's enough to rank our state the 11th highest in childhood obesity in the nation, according to the Eat Smart Move More program of North Carolina.

Robin Fulcher said taking her son to Dr. Jahangir has been a revelation. The pediatrician has done the seemingly impossible and gotten through to Kenny about the importance of losing weight.

The child used to be downright stubborn about diet and exercise. He has since turned into an exercise fanatic, taking up both karate and paintball.

Kenny's eating habits have also dramatically changed. He'll eat chicken and turkey now, instead of requesting something greasy or deep-fried. He still loves the steaks grilled up by his father, Kenny Sr. But the family limits

grilling out to just once a week now.

His mother proudly boasts her son has gone down one shirt and waist size after just a month of joining the Well on your Weigh program. She has also noticed a change in how other kids treat her son since he's begun slimming down.

"The kids are nicer now," she said. "That Dr. Jahangir sure is a life saver!"



Tahmida Jahangir, M.D.
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