

## FOR YOUR HEALTH

## Breastfeeding has many benefits

Breastfeeding provides an array of benefits for mothers and babies.

While almost 80 percent of new mothers breastfeed their newborns, many do so for just three weeks. I recommend babies be breastfed for at least six months, and a year is even better.



Anat Sapan, M.D.

Breastfeeding raises babies' immune systems, so they're less susceptible to illnesses and infections, and it also promotes brain development. Studies show that breastfed babies have higher IQs than babies who were not breastfed, and there's also some evidence that breastfed babies have lower rates of heart disease and auto-immune diseases.

Mothers also benefit from breastfeeding, starting with creating special bonds with their children. From a health perspective, breastfeeding can reduce mothers' risks of breast and ovarian cancers; stimulate the uterus to contract to its original size quicker; and be a weight-loss aid, since it burns 500 calories per day. It's also more convenient and less expensive than using formula.

Some new mothers' milk never comes in, but most women will have the physical ability to breastfeed and babies typically will latch on with little prompting. Nurses and family members can offer assistance, and the La Leche League, an international organization providing information and support to breastfeeding mothers, is an excellent resource.

## Tips for successful breastfeeding

■ **Start early.** While milk may not come in for three days, nursing should begin within an hour after delivery, if possible. Babies will ingest colostrum, a thin fluid that contains antibodies to disease.

■ **Position babies properly.** The baby's mouth should be wide open, with the nipple as far back into his or her mouth as possible.

■ **Nurse on demand.** Newborns will need to nurse about every two hours, not on any strict schedule. A more predictable routine can be developed later.

■ **Eat right and get rest.** Nursing mothers should eat a balanced diet that includes 500 extra calories a day and six to eight glasses of fluid. Rest is also recommended, to prevent fatigue-aggravated breast infections.

There are so many breastfeeding benefits. It's a great way to provide children with a developmental head start and new mothers with their first opportunity to add value to their child's life.

To learn more join me in attending a free community lecture in April. There will be free health information, giveaways and refreshments. Seating is limited. Please call 428-2747.

Anat Sapan, M.D. is a board-certified OB/GYN with Solano Regional Medical Group (SRMG), the multiphysician medical group affiliated with Sutter Regional Medical Foundation, a member of the Solano Coalition for Better Health.

Too many heavy children  
Study reveals 1 in 5 US preschoolers is obese

By LINDSEY TANNER  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO — A striking new study says almost 1 in 5 American 4-year-olds is obese, and the rate is alarmingly higher among American Indian children, with nearly a third of them obese. Researchers were surprised to see differences by race at so early an age.

Overall, more than half a million 4-year-olds are obese, the study suggests. Obesity is more common in Hispanic and black youngsters, too, but the disparity is most startling in American Indians, whose rate is almost double that of whites.

The lead author said that rate is worrisome among children so young, even in a population at higher risk for obesity because of other health problems and economic disadvantages.

"The magnitude of these differences was larger than we expected, and it is surprising to see differences by racial groups present so early in childhood," said Sarah Anderson, an Ohio State University public health researcher. She conducted the research with Temple University's Dr. Robert Whitaker.

Dr. Glenn Flores, a pediatrician and public health professor at University of Texas Southwestern Medical School in Dallas, said the research is an important contribution to studies documenting racial and ethnic disparities in children's weight.

"The cumulative evidence is alarming because within just a few decades, America will become a 'minority majority' nation," he said. Without interventions, the next generation "will be at very high risk" for heart disease, high blood pressure, cancers, joint diseases and other problems connected with obesity, said Flores, who was not involved in the new research.

The study is an analysis of nationally representative height and weight data on 8,550 preschoolers born in 2001. Children were measured in their homes and were part of a study conducted by the government's National Center for Education Statistics.

The results appear in Monday's Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine.

Almost 13 percent of Asian children were obese,



The Associated Press file

Almost 13 percent of Asian 4-year-olds were obese, along with 16 percent of whites, almost 21 percent of blacks, 22 percent of Hispanics, and 31 percent of American Indians in that same age category. Overall, 1 in 5 preschoolers in the U.S. is obese.

along with 16 percent of whites, almost 21 percent of blacks, 22 percent of Hispanics, and 31 percent of American Indians.

Children were considered obese if their body-mass index, a height-weight ratio, was in the 95th percentile or higher based on government BMI growth charts. For 4-year-olds, that would be a BMI of about 18.

For example, a girl who is 4½ years old, 40 inches tall and 42 pounds would have a BMI of about 18, weighing 4 pounds more than the government's upper limit for that age, height and gender.

Some previous studies of young children did not distinguish between kids who were merely overweight versus obese, or they examined fewer racial groups.

The current study looked only at obesity and a specific age group. Anderson called it the first analysis of national obesity rates in preschool kids in the five ethnic or racial groups.

The researchers did not examine reasons for the disparities, but others offered several theories.

Flores cited higher rates of diabetes in American Indians, and also Hispanics, which scientists believe may be due to genetic differences.

Also, other factors that

can increase obesity risks tend to be more common among minorities, including poverty, less educated parents, and diets high in fat and calories, Flores said.

Jessica Burger, a member of the Little River Ottawa tribe and health director of a tribal clinic in Manistee, Mich., said many children at her clinic are overweight or obese, including preschoolers.

Burger, a nurse, said one culprit is gestational diabetes, which occurs during a mother's pregnancy. That increases children's chances of becoming overweight and is almost twice as common in American Indian women, compared with whites.

She also blamed the federal commodity program for low-income people that many American Indian families receive.

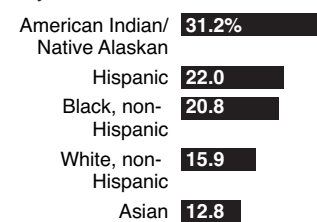
The offerings include lots of pastas, rice and other high-carbohydrate foods that contribute to what Burger said is often called a "commod bod."

"When that's the predominant dietary base in a household without access to fresh fruits and vegetables, that really creates a better chance of a person becoming obese," she said.

Also, Burger noted that exercise is not a priority in many American Indian fam-

## Preschool obesity

A new study says 18 percent of preschoolers are obese, with higher percentages among most minorities.

Prevalence of obesity  
4-year-olds, 2005

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics AP

ilies struggling to make ends meet, with parents feeling stressed just to provide basic necessities.

To address the problem, her clinic has created activities for young Indian children, including summer camps and a winter break "outdoor day" that had kids braving 8-degree temperatures to play games including "snowsnake."

That's a traditional American Indian contest in which players throw long, carved wooden "snakes" along a snow or ice trail to see whose lands the farthest.

The hope is that giving kids used to modern sedentary ways a taste of a more active traditional American Indian lifestyle will help them adopt healthier habits, she said.

## HOROSCOPES

BY  
HOLIDAY  
MATHIS

**ARIES** (March 21-April 19). You think it's obvious what you need, and yet those close to you are so wrapped up in their own minds that they won't see it. Ask for help. Otherwise you'll be doing everything by yourself.

**TAURUS** (April 20-May 20). People don't have to think alike to be part of the same community. Get involved with a diverse group of supportive people. Before the day is done you might just strike up a soul-nurturing friendship.

**GEMINI** (May 21-June 21). You need time alone. You have an awareness of immaterial dimensions of human life. A solitary exploration of your mind and spirit will bring you peace and make you feel powerful again.

**CANCER** (June 22-July 22). You wouldn't mind living a bit more simply, and yet you don't know how to start. Eliminate at least 10 superfluous possessions and you'll immediately feel better. Give up the things that don't bring you joy.

**LEO** (July 23-Aug. 22). You have taken on more than your share and at a hefty cost. You want recognition for the superhuman feat. Don't wait for others to notice. Privately acknowledge and praise yourself. You deserve it.

**VIRGO** (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You have a deep conviction and will stand by your belief. Others say you're being brave, but it doesn't feel that way to you. You're only doing what comes naturally to you -- it's just who you are.

**LIBRA** (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You desire to serve the greater good. You won't blindly submit to the will of another person until you're sure that it's the right thing for everyone. Gather more information. You have plenty of time to weigh your decision.

**SCORPIO** (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). There are a million

Today's  
birthday

Your personal life thrives when you're on a professional or creative mission. Over the next 10 weeks you enter a higher level of business and will be put in charge of things. Sagittarius and Libra adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 30, 12, 18, 22 and 45.

ways to do the task before you. If you ask around, you'll find everyone has an opinion. Too much info will only confuse the matter unnecessarily. It's better just to start and figure it out along the way.

**SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You don't need many words to get through this day. You're sure of yourself and won't be inclined to discuss your position or direction. Silence seems to strengthen your character.

**CAPRICORN** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Take a break from your expectations, especially those attached to your family members. When you don't expect anything, you will be able to recognize and welcome what comes, which isn't bad at all!

**AQUARIUS** (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). There is nothing to liberate. Your feelings tell you what's right and wrong so there's nothing to think through. You are learning to trust the illogical way your intuition sometimes works.

**PISCES** (Feb. 19-March 20). You have been on automatic pilot in some regard and you'll wake up to it today. Once you become conscious of the problem it will be pretty easy to solve. You need more of something and less of something else.

## ANNIE'S MAILBOX

## My nephew's drug and alcohol addiction has sent a promising life down the drain

**Dear Annie:** I am a 46-year-old male, never married, with no children. My sister, "Stacy," has three daughters and a 15-year-old son from her first marriage. She has since remarried, and none of the kids gets along well with Stacy's new husband.

I've always been close to my nephew, "Steve." I recently found out he has a serious drinking and drug problem. A month ago, Steve was with some drugie friends at the beach, drowning his sorrows after a breakup with his girlfriend. He drank too much and woke up in the hospital. His "friends" just left him face down on a pier, where he was discovered by a good Samaritan who called an ambulance.

I thought after this experience he would shape up, but I was mistaken. He's made new friends with a group of homeless people. He says they are fun to be with and considers them his family now. Stacy tells me he has decided to leave home so that he can travel around the state with them, eating at

soup kitchens and sleeping under bridges. He believes the world is coming to an end in 2012 and wants to have a good time before it does.

I lost a brother 28 years ago as a result of his addictions. Stacy's older daughter had the same problem, and they spent a lot of money trying, unsuccessfully, to "fix" her. They don't have the money to do the same with Steve, so Stacy has completely given up.

Annie, my heart is breaking. I fear Steve will end up dead in a gutter. I can't believe Stacy won't do anything. Are there state agencies that can help? — Crushed In California

**Dear Crushed:** Unfortunately, your family history of drug and alcohol abuse means Steve is predisposed to be addicted, and unless

he is willing to be helped, there's not much Stacy (or anyone) can do. The California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs ([adp.state.ca.us](http://adp.state.ca.us)) has an excellent treatment program. Find out whether someone there can help you. Good luck.

**Dear Annie:** Another Mother's Day is coming up and I'd like your opinion. Should a husband honor his wife on Mother's Day? My husband says I am not his mother, so he is not obligated to buy me a present or even a card. He also does not take any initiative to help our young children with a Mother's Day gift or card. What do you think? Am I expecting too much? — Sad Mother

**Dear Sad:** A thoughtful husband sees that his young children acknowledge their mom on Mother's Day. A loving husband will also let his wife know how much he appreciates her and not ignore what she considers a special occasion. Your husband sounds like he's looking for an excuse not to be bothered.

Becoming angry and resentful solves nothing. Buy yourself a nice gift and sign the card from your husband, and then gush to him how much you love it.

**Dear Annie:** I had a good laugh at "Not Trying to Be Burly About Kimberly," whose husband's family,

even after being told, still insists on calling her Kim.

My husband and I have been married for 13 years. We are of different races and reside in the North. All his family lives in the Deep South. They must know my name is Julie by now. But even after being corrected numerous times, they all call me Judy and even send mail addressed that way.

At first I was offended and thought they didn't like me. I also considered that maybe they couldn't pronounce the letter "L." But after years of knowing them, and the bonds of love and caring that have formed, I've learned that life is too short to worry about what someone calls me. It's more important that they call. — Julie, Judy

**Dear Julie:** You sound like one classy lady. Thanks for your input.

Happy Easter to all our Christian readers.

Please e-mail your questions to [annie@mailbox@comcast.net](mailto:annie@mailbox@comcast.net), or write to: Annie's Mailbox, P.O. Box 118190, Chicago, IL 60611.