

Expert cites tech tools that can help kids get on healthy track today

BY KELLI CALABRESE

In today's culture, instant gratification reigns supreme. Even when it comes to the fitness, nutrition and overriding health



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concerns of children, parents, grandparents, teachers and other youth caregivers continually seek tools and resources that can be implemented and utilized immediately. With this in mind, here are six modern-day digital resources that can help promote positive lifestyle changes for children struggling with weight issues:

- **Internet Calculators:** Body Mass Index (BMI) is a reliable indicator of body fat levels for most children and teens, and offers an inexpensive and easy-to-perform method of screening for weight categories that may lead to health problems. For children and teens, BMI is age- and sex-specific. A BMI calculator for children and teens ages two-19 years old is freely available at the Centers for Disease Control website at <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/dnpabmi/>. The Children's Energy (Calories) Needs Calculator (www.bcm.edu/research/centers/childrens-nutrition-research-center/caloriesneed.cfm) developed by Baylor College of Medicine is another useful online tool that calculates how many calories a

child needs each day, based on height/weight/physical activity level.

- **Online Quizzes:** Childhood obesity is a growing epidemic around the world. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that, globally, 22 million kids under the age of five are overweight, and the statistics are equally frightening for adolescents, tweens and teens. Societies must get educated on the topic in order to take effective action. While you have heard much about "childhood obesity," how much do you *really* know? Find out with a quick and free quiz that's available at the Discovery Health website (<http://health.howstuffworks.com/pregnancy-and-parenting/childhood-conditions/childhood-obesity-quiz.htm>). Another online quiz developed by Professor Diane Ward at the University of North Carolina School of Public Health titled "Is your child at risk of becoming overweight?" (<http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/2003-07-21-kids-chart.htm>) is equally helpful for keeping parents well-informed.

- **eBooks:** While bookshelves are filled with hard cover or paperback books that help parents manage their child's nutrition and fitness, there are decidedly few illustrated fictional story books available that directly educate and inspire children to live a healthy lifestyle. In the realm of eBooks, the numbers whittle down to a paltry few. One eBook of note is the award-winning fictional children's story Making Healthy Choices—A Story

to Inspire Fit, Weight-Wise Kids (<http://www.notfault.com/>). This eBook, available in both a Boys' and Girls' edition, is identical to its paperback counterpart and includes a bonus recipe section only available with the eBook. In this ground-breaking story, important diet, fitness and health themes "served up" in an easy-to-read style are intended to help overweight kids get on a healthy track, as well as motivate those within a healthy weight range to not only continue making wise lifestyle choices, but also better understand and empathize with peers currently struggling with a weight problem.

- **APPS:** There are a number of sound APPs on the market to help kids eat healthy and get active. Interestingly, one such APP titled Healthy Eating, Healthy You features exclusive healthy recipes developed by chefs at MGM Resorts. Another APP titled Child Obesity Guide provides caregivers with assessment and planning tools. It includes chapters on "How to Diagnose Obesity," "Meal Planning," and "Using Labels to Eat Healthy." An APP titled Nutrition and Healthy Eating provides three fun science-based learning games for preschoolers and kindergarteners. Kids learn how to recognize different foods and how to create a delicious and balanced meal for a penguin's birthday party.

- **Interactive Games:** Online games are a fun and easy way to engage kids while also teaching them health principles. Kidnetic (<http://www.kidnetic.com>)



com/), which is produced by Kraft Foods, is one great interactive website featuring a myriad of cool games, scavenger hunts, challenges and even a cool “Move Mixer” dance designer. The CDC’s BAM! Body and Mind website (<http://www.cdc.gov/bam/>) also offers online games that teach kids about the body and mind.

- Videos: The Internet is rife with helpful videos that pertain to childhood obesity. There are educational and informative videos like those detailing tactical strategies to help children get healthy, including initiatives spearheaded by First Lady Michelle Obama, as well as moving and inspirational documenta-

ries showcasing kids who have changed their lives for the better through good nutrition and fitness. Videos are an extremely powerful tool that can provide instant, on-the-spot, on-demand motivation.

KELLI CALABRESE, a leading fitness, nutrition and lifestyle coach for almost three decades, has owned and operated fitness centers and corporate programs, was the lead fitness expert for eDiets, and edited fitness professional magazines. She speaks internationally and is an executive with Isagenix. Kelli has a heart for helping people realize their full physical potential and live their best lives.