

# FITNESS VIEW

BY BONNIE KAYE

Bonnie,

I have a 12-year-old son and he is noticeably overweight. Not obese by any means, but heavy. He already plays sports for his school, but I just want to know what I can do differently for him. Both my husband and I are overweight.

Kathy Fletcher, Sheepshead Bay

Dear Kathy,

I wish more parents were like you...taking action to make sure their kids have the best shot at becoming fit adults—you are right...your son is at risk of developing of serious health problems such as hypertension, diabetes, even heart disease, not to mention the lifelong stigma and problems that come with being an overweight or even an obese adult.

The combination of lifestyle and heredity work together to determine whether you are fit or fat, and since you mentioned you and your husband are overweight, your son sounds like he has his work cut out for him so he definitely needs to exercise and eat right starting NOW, and needs for you and your husband to get in on the action and be good role models for him and become an active part of the solution before his weight problem gets out of control.

You say he plays sports at school, which is a good sign, so we know likes to move around. But that's not enough—you need to make sure he is eating a healthy diet. Take a look at your cupboards—are they full of snacks and cookies and junk food? If so, clean them out. When you cook meals at home, what do you make? Healthy meals like chicken, brown rice, vegetables should be on the menu. Also, I would encourage you and your husband to join a health club and exercise to show your son that you believe in fitness and drop a few pounds yourself and try doing some things together as a family on the weekends such as rollerblading, walking, hiking, or in the park.

Another way to encourage your son to get fit is to get behind him on the sport he is into by practicing some of his drills with him in the yard or park. Exercising together brings you closer and gives all of some much-needed exercise at the same time. Another great idea—get a dog! He'll have a lot of fun logging an extra mile or two just by walking his little buddy around the park or neighborhood each day.

A lot of parents are going through what you are, and it's getting worse every year, every decade. The American Academy of Pediatrics

says about one in three kids under the age of 12 are overweight today versus about one in four just ten years ago. Our kids and we as a nation are getting fatter and fatter, as fat kids do tend to grow-up to become fat adults.

You can blame the usual suspects—fast food, television, computers, the net, and now, the ubiquitous XBOX, all trends that contribute to an unhealthy, sedentary lifestyle. But there are even two more dangerous trends threatening today's children:

Budget cutbacks and political correctness to the point of pampering. Ask your son if he even

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has a daily gym class at school anymore, as many schools have cut them out of their

budget, so exercise we took for granted as a youth our kids may not be getting—and you'll be surprised how many sports programs get slashed from the budget as well—you are lucky your son is even on a team! And by political correctness,

I am referring to the absurd notion that some schools think dodge ball be banned in gym class because it's too rough or unfair to smaller or slower kids.

*(continued on next page)*

# FITNESS VIEW CONT'D



*Bonnie Kaye is a certified personal trainer, Emmy-award winning sports and health reporter/producer, and has been a CBS News and CBS Sports contributor and a two-time Olympic correspondent for CBS TV & CBS Radio. Bonnie has also made appearances on MSNBC, WB11, and Fox 5 News in New York as a contributing editor for Fitness Rx Magazine for women and produces and hosts her own nationally distributed health and television series, "Inside Fitness with Bonnie Kaye." For more info, log onto <http://www.insidefitness.com>*

Well, kids, I've got news for ya...life ain't always fair, and it can be rough—those are lessons you learn in sports like dodge ball— I know I did, as the smallest girl in gym class.

I know I did, as the smallest girl in gym class. If you're small, be quick and crafty and get out of the way! If you're slow, learn to catch the ball— or work on your skills to get faster. Pretty soon we are going to have one in two overweight kids under the age of 12 because they are all going to be pampered and lazy, sitting around in front of the television 24/7, afraid to do anything but click on the remote while eating potato chips—but at least they weren't hit by a red rubber ball.

Encourage your son in his chosen sport. Stay involved and show an interest in his activities. Just as important, take care of yourself too.

**Best of luck,  
Bonnie**

**If you have a fitness question for Bonnie Kaye, email our editor at the Brooklyn View at: [thebrooklynview@yahoo.com](mailto:thebrooklynview@yahoo.com).**