



*For Immediate Release*

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**Experts warn that childhood obesity will fuel an epidemic of future cardiovascular problems:  
Familyatheart.org offers family-focused tips to safeguard your family.**

WASHINGTON (November 23, 2009) -- As the American Heart Association's annual meeting came to a close this week in Orlando, Florida, the stark implications of our nation's growing obesity epidemic on future cardiovascular risk were woefully apparent. Gains made in recent decades to reduce risk factors for heart disease, the decrease in cigarette smoking for example, are quickly being obscured by the nation's new silent killer: body fat.

"Obesity has clearly emerged as a very important factor to consider in children's cardiovascular risk," said Laura Hayman, Ph.D., RN, a leading researcher on obesity and cardiovascular disease in children, adolescents, and families. "The increase in the prevalence of obesity and its comorbidities is a real cause for concern for future generations."

Hayman, who sits on the Board of Directors for the Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association (PCNA), noted that *primordial prevention* – prevention of the risk factors themselves through changes in social and environmental conditions – is one of the most important pieces of the puzzle. PCNA's new family-focused website, [familyatheart.org](http://familyatheart.org), promotes healthy living at the earliest stages of life, encouraging parents to be role models for their children by adopting heart healthy eating patterns and daily physical fitness.

The need to intervene early in life was highlighted by a new study presented at the AHA meeting on Tuesday. According to researchers at Cincinnati Children's Hospital, not only have obesity rates among children and teens risen in the last three decades, but risk for heart disease, as measured by heart thickness or left ventricular mass (LVM), has increased as well. These findings echo recent research from Canada showing that rates of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and obesity among teens were unusually high and increasing over time.

Familyatheart.org offers parents and health professionals "evidenced-based" guidance for adopting a healthy lifestyle and preventing heart disease before it starts. The site focuses on three key areas to build a foundation for a heart healthy future: good nutrition, regular physical activity and maintaining a healthy weight.

According to Hayman, the earlier these healthy habits are embraced, the better. "The building blocks for cardiovascular wellness are laid early," she said. "Although it's never too late to change unhealthy habits, it's never too early to focus on establishing good ones."

Visit [www.FamilyatHeart.org](http://www.FamilyatHeart.org) for information on how to improve your family's heart health.

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