

# New Year = New Solutions to Helping Children Maintain A Healthy Weight

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**One in six children** in the U.S. is overweight.

Given these numbers, it's likely that you know, or are related to, one of them.

But did you *know* that overweight children are at high risk of becoming overweight or obese adults? And that this increases their risk of developing serious chronic conditions including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and certain cancers?

It's a looming public health crisis that the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the nation's medical research agency, is trying to prevent through its **We Can!**<sup>™</sup> (Ways to Enhance Children's Activity & Nutrition) program. **We Can!** provides parents, families and communities the science-based activities and resources to help 8- to 13-year-olds stay at a healthy weight.

"**We Can!** is working to help families eat right, be more physically active and spend less time in front of the screen so that their children can stay at a healthy weight," said Karen Donato, S.M., coordinator of Overweight and Obesity Research Applications, National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. "In 2010, we look forward to further expanding our program to community leaders across the U.S. through nine regional trainings that will teach participants how to use our resources."

**We Can!** is unique because it focuses on parents and other caregivers, providing them with tip sheets and tools, as well as a hands-on, multiple-session program that covers the basics of maintaining a healthy weight—the **We Can!** Energize Our Families: Parent Program.

**We Can!** also offers three types of programs that help children learn how to and why they should eat right, be more active and reduce time spent in front of the TV or computer screen. See the box for details on these programs.

Communities can choose from these and other resources (many of which are available in Spanish), tailoring the program to fit their specific needs. This flexibility is just one reason why the program has blossomed since it was launched in 2005, growing steadily in communities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and multiple other countries. It also has an impressive list of supporting partners from both the private and public sectors, ranging from Fortune 500 companies to government agencies.

You can learn more about **We Can!**—including how to join—and download free tip sheets and other tools at <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov>. A mouse click or two could help you make a big difference in a child's health and future.

## **We Can!** Youth Programs

**CATCH<sup>™</sup> (Coordinated Approach to Child Health)** Kids Club helps elementary school-aged children adopt healthy dietary and physical activity behaviors by helping improve the health environments of recreation programs, schools and home.

**S.M.A.R.T. (Student Media Awareness to Reduce Television)** is an in-school program for third- and fourth-graders that teaches them about the need to cut back on television, videotape and DVD viewing and playing video and computer games.

**Media-Smart Youth: Eat, Think and Be Active!<sup>®</sup>** is an afterschool program designed to help 11- to 13-year-olds understand the complex media world around them and how it can influence their health, especially nutrition and physical activity.