

Childhood Obesity Prevention Is Focus of Global Nutrition Transition Conference

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Orlando, FL ([prHWY](#)) March 16, 2010 - The obesity epidemic is spreading among children, not just in the US, but worldwide, and preventive measures - with an emphasis on a low fat diet and regular activity - should be implemented during the first two years of life.

This was a key message during the second and final day of discussions among physicians and nutrition scientists at the Global Nutrition Transition Conference in Orlando, Fla. Today's speakers included Dr. Bill Lands, noted expert on dietary fats; Harry Greene, MD, Emeritus Professor of Pediatrics at Vanderbilt University; Dr. Marco DeAngelis, professor of exercise science at the University of L'Aquila, Italy; and Nobel Laureate Dr. Louis Ignarro.

The two-day conference brought together leading experts from around the world to address the impact of the Nutrition Transition - dramatic shifts in diet and exercise patterns in developing countries - that has led to unprecedented increases in the incidence of overweight and obesity in adults and children worldwide.

In the United States, obesity rates in children have quadrupled in the last 25 years. And, along with globalization of the economy, "the unhealthy diet and lifestyle habits of industrialized nations are becoming global, too," said Greene.

Not only are adults affected but the incidence of childhood obesity is soaring worldwide. "In the UK, childhood obesity rates have increased by 0.5 percent per year for the last 10 years, and in countries like China, where obesity was virtually unknown 15 years ago, rates are rising similarly," notes Greene.

As a result, children are experiencing the same obesity-related diseases as adults - such as type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure. But the difference between children and adults is that, in children, there is a shorter time interval between the onset of obesity and the development of obesity-related diseases. "Obesity-related diseases that may take 10 years or more to develop in adults can appear as early as 3-5 years after the onset of obesity in children," adds Greene.

Scientists say that prevention tactics are critical, since obesity can set in firmly as early as age five. In fact, research suggests that the most critical period for prevention of obesity may be during the first two years of life.

"If we could prevent childhood obesity, this generation would witness a 50 percent reduction in obesity as adults," said Greene.

Key tactics for obesity prevention include a healthy low fat diet with an emphasis on healthy fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins - along with limited amounts of sweets. Establishing the breakfast habit and limiting meals eaten away from home are also important - but more difficult for time-challenged families.

Regular meal times, fewer unhealthy snacks, and setting aside time for regular exercise and adequate sleep are all critical factors, too. But, says Greene, "the real challenge will be to help families find ways to provide their children with a healthy diet while meeting their demands for tasty, convenient foods."

The two-day Conference is being sponsored by Herbalife. Drs. DeAngelis and Ignarro are members of Herbalife's global Nutrition Advisory Board.

About Herbalife Ltd.

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