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# GYMNASTICS IS THE ANSWER!

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Children in the United States are heavier and less active than ever. First Lady Michelle Obama has even initiated a campaign against childhood obesity called "Let's Move" ([www.letsmove.gov](http://www.letsmove.gov)). They report that children between the ages of 8 and 18 spend an average of seven hours per day using television, computers, cell phones, video games and other entertainment media. As school budgets become tighter, the first things to be eliminated are the arts programs, physical education and athletic programs.

The immediate, as well as life long, health consequences of obesity include heart disease, high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol, Type II diabetes and asthma, to name a few. Parents, physicians, and communities must work together to provide regular physical activity for our children, that can begin in early childhood, can be done by any child, and has enough action and variety to be fun. Gymnastics is the answer!

Gymnastics education can begin at an early age. Once your child is walking, a parent/toddler class is an excellent place



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to start. Your child can comfortably learn skills that improve balance and coordination with you right next to him or her. Your child can enjoy being around other children, but with the one-on-one attention they need. Parents also learn skills they can use in developmental play at home.

As your child matures, brain growth is very rapid and new skills can be readily learned. In the preschool years, children continue to improve their gross motor skills and also begin to develop some strength and flexibility. They are now able to participate cooperatively in a group setting and follow directions from a coach/teacher.

Gymnastics for older children is available in a variety of formats including recreational classes and competitive team participation. This allows all children to participate in the sport regardless of their size and/or

ability. Each child can advance at his/her own speed as he/she learns new skills. Gymnastics not only increases strength, grace and flexibility, but also encourages hard work, discipline and determination. Gymnasts learn to tackle challenges and overcome their fears as they advance in the sport. The action, variety of skills and events, and the reward of accomplishment keep the sport of gymnastics fun and exciting for young athletes.

The skills learned in early gymnastics training will allow your child to be successful not only in gymnastics, but also in any other sports he/she may choose. Kids need to develop healthy habits early – to eat healthy foods and be active every day. Give gymnastics a try! Find a club near you at [www.usagymclub.com](http://www.usagymclub.com). You and your child will be glad you did.