

Center helps children manage weight

The new Healthy LifeWays: Valley's Center for Pediatric Wellness and Weight Management provides a comprehensive program of medical and behavioral health care, nutrition services, and family support to help overweight and obese children and teenagers lose weight, improve their health, and reduce their risk of developing chronic illnesses. Healthy LifeWays is a Valley Health System program based at a state-of-the-art medical office at 74 Pascack Road in Park Ridge.

Founded and directed by Valley Medical Group pediatrician and childhood obesity expert Sherry Sakowitz-Sukkar, M.D., Healthy LifeWays offers a program with continued maintenance support as needed for obese children and adolescents who have a BMI (body mass index) at or above the 95th percentile for their age. Children who are at or above the 85th percentile and also have an associated medical risk or family history of chronic disease, such as diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, or obstructive sleep apnea, can also join Healthy LifeWays.

"Our goal is for Healthy LifeWays to be educational and life-changing, to help children and teens, with the support of their families, develop mindful eating habits, engage in fun exercise activities, and learn new behaviors so they can sustain a healthy lifestyle and prevent a lifetime of serious chronic disease," says Dr. Sakowitz-Sukkar. "Our program follows recommendations put forth by the American Academy of Pediatrics to combat the current epidemic of childhood obesity, which is one of the most pressing health concerns of the 21st century. Research shows

that a staggering 80 percent of obese children grow up to be obese adults."

Healthy LifeWays: Valley's Center for Pediatric Wellness and Weight Management is only one of several hospital-based programs of its kind in the New York-New Jersey metropolitan area. In addition to Dr. Sakowitz-Sukkar, the program's staff includes a pediatric dietitian/nutrition staff, social worker, and support staff. Exercise coaches on staff at affiliated facilities are also a part of the program.

Healthy LifeWays' program starts with a medical evaluation, a psychological/behavioral evaluation, and a nutrition evaluation and counseling. Each week, the patient sees Dr. Sakowitz-Sukkar or other staff as needed. Patients are encouraged to participate in supervised exercise activities at a gym of their choice. Soon to be added are cooking classes and support groups for patients and their parents.

The latest data (2012) released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) shows almost one out of every three children in the United States ages 2 to 19 are overweight or obese. Almost 25 percent of children in New Jersey are overweight or obese, according to the CDC's 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System. Obesity does not discriminate, but affects children of all races, ethnicities, and economic levels. The CDC notes that intervention research concludes that successful obesity treatment consists of a combination of diet, behavioral modification, cognitive therapy, and exercise.

"By personalizing our program

to fit the needs of each individual child and family, we aim to help each child attain weight-loss success and reduce the risk of serious chronic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension, and accompanying psychosocial disorders, including depression, stress, and bullying," says Dr. Sakowitz-Sukkar. "The time to stop obesity is before a teenager reaches adulthood because almost all chronic diseases are associated with obesity, and they often begin in childhood."

Dr. Sakowitz-Sukkar and the Healthy LifeWays team collaborate with patients' private pediatricians and other health care professionals. Although most patients are referred by their pediatricians, self-referrals by parents are welcome. Dr. Sakowitz-Sukkar also refers patients to Valley's pediatric specialists as needed, including pediatric cardiologists, endocrinologists, and sleep medicine physicians. Valley's Center for Metabolic and Weight Loss Surgery may evaluate patients for bariatric surgery.

Prior to founding Healthy LifeWays: Valley's Center for Pediatric Wellness and Weight Management, Dr. Sakowitz-Sukkar was associate director of the Live Light ... Live Right-Child Obesity Program at Brookdale University Hospital and Medical Center in Brooklyn and director of the medical center's Pediatric Residency Program. She received her medical degree from Ross University School of Medicine in the West Indies and completed her pediatric residency at Brookdale.

To make an appointment with Dr. Sakowitz-Sukkar or for more information about Health LifeWays, call 201-391-0846.

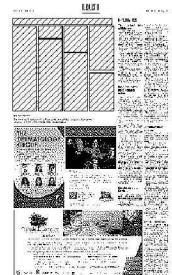




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Sherry Sakowitz-Sukkar, M.D.