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Preventing Obesity in Young Children: Researchers Examine Health Promotion and Obesity Prevention Initiatives

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PRESS RELEASE

More than 12 percent of preschoolers are obese, which means they have a body mass index above the 95th percentile. Among Black and Hispanic children, the figure rises to 16 percent. These early growth patterns often continue through childhood and adolescence, increasing children's health risks, which can affect almost every system in the body, from cardiovascular to mental health. Childhood obesity often occurs in the context of family obesity. Evidence has shown that interventions that address families' dietary choices, mealtime behaviors, and patterns of physical activity have the highest likelihood of success early in life.

The Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) will host a symposium during its Biennial Meeting that brings together researchers to examine health promotion and obesity prevention initiatives—from those that focus on individual behaviors to national nutrition assistance policies.

Among the questions that will be addressed:

- What can research tell us about mealtime behavior? When meals involve picky eating and fights with siblings, parents sometimes use unhealthy food choices to manage children's behavior. How can parents most effectively address these issues?
- What are the effects on families of recent changes to the Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), a federal program that supports the nutrition of more than half of the infants in the United States? Are these changes in the food package playing a role in the foods eaten by low-income minority families?
- What can a study of health promotion and obesity prevention among low-income African American and White families of toddlers tell us? Specifically, how do healthy maternal diet and physical activity, as well as parenting strategies to manage toddlers' behavior, promote healthy eating, physical activity, and responsiveness between mothers and children at mealtime?

The symposium will take place at the Washington Convention Center, Room 611, on Saturday, April 20, 2013, from 10:20 to 11:50 a.m.

Researchers: Maureen M. Black, Margo Candelaria, Kristen Hurley, Erin Hager, Laura Latta, Yan Wang, Raquel Arbaiza, Falguni Patel, Samantha Bento, University of Maryland; Barbara Fiese, Brenda Koester University of Illinois at UrbanaChampaign; Marian Fitzgibbon, Angela Kong, Lisa Tussing-Humphreys, Angela Odoms-Young, Linda Schiffer, University of Illinois at Chicago; Laura Caulfield, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health