

Prudent way to fight childhood obesity

By Jane E. Brody, New York Times

Pardon the cliché, but it happens to be particularly apt in this case: In trying to tame the nation's obesity epidemic, an ounce of prevention is decidedly worth a pound of cure – considerably more than a pound, in fact, according to the findings of a five-year collaborative research project.

Not only can several popular strategies help children achieve and maintain a normal weight and, in the future, reduce adult obesity, they can also save the country many health care dollars and, in a few cases, generate revenue to support further weight control efforts.

The project, initial results of which were published recently by the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, is called the Childhood Obesity Cost-Effectiveness Study, or Choices. It examined in exhaustive detail the costs and benefits of four possible approaches to curbing childhood obesity: placing an excise tax on sugar-sweetened beverages; ending the tax write-off for advertising on children's television; increasing moderate to vigorous physical activity in schools; and fostering healthier habits (more physical activity, better nutrition and less screen time) in preschool settings.