



**New York City Department of  
Health and Mental Hygiene**

Thomas Farley, M.D., M.P.H.  
Commissioner

Dear Health Care Professional:

Pediatric obesity is a growing problem nationally and in New York City, where 43% of elementary school children are overweight or obese. Obese children and adolescents are more likely to become obese adults. Even while young, they are more likely to develop obesity-related disorders such as diabetes, hyperlipidemia and hypertension.

Health care providers can play a critical role in preventing these illnesses. Many children live in environments where overeating is easy and daily life doesn't require much physical activity. As a health care provider, you can help families understand the important balance between energy intake and energy expenditure. You can also help them develop realistic behavioral goals. Your support and frequent assessment of progress can have a powerful, long-term impact. We urge all pediatric health care providers to:

- **Assess all children and adolescents for overweight and obesity. By tracking patients' BMI percentile for age, you can identify at-risk patients early.**
- **Educate children, adolescents and families about healthful eating and physical activity, and reinforce messages at each visit.**
- **Work with families to set realistic goals for healthy eating and exercise.**

Exercise and good nutrition benefit all children, regardless of weight status, and New York City is working hard to promote them. The Department of Education has developed a tool called the FITNESSGRAM to assess children's fitness and provide feedback to parents. And the Health Department has developed the enclosed action kit to help you do your part. The kit is filled with clinical tools, patient education materials and other resources to help you work with patients to reach and maintain a healthy weight.

We hope you will find this action kit useful. Your Health Department representative is visiting you to discuss ways to apply these methods and materials in your practice. Thank you for your dedication, and your contribution to the health of New York City's children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Farley".

Thomas Farley, M.D., M.P.H.  
*Commissioner*

Summer 2009