

West Cook YMCA and Loyola Medicine Partner on Childhood Obesity Healthy Weight and Your Child Pilot Program Starting at Gottlieb Memorial Hospital

MELROSE PARK, IL – In September, the West Cook YMCA and Loyola Medicine will begin offering Healthy Weight and Your Child, the first pilot program in Illinois designed to empower children between the ages of 7-13, with the support from their families, to reach a healthy weight and live a healthier lifestyle.

With the generous support of Loyola Medicine, Healthy Weight and Your Child will be held at Gottlieb Memorial Hospital in Melrose Park. In addition to referring patients to the program, Loyola is sponsoring scholarships so low-income families can participate.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), obesity now affects 17 percent of all children and adolescents in the United States—triple the rate from just one generation ago. Today, one in six children are obese and one in three are overweight. These children are at greater risk for a number of health problems such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol and mental health issues.

“The West Cook YMCA has a long history of advancing the health and well-being of children in Oak Park, River Forest, Forest Park, Maywood and surrounding communities, and helping children reach a healthy weight is important now more than ever,” said Phillip Jimenez, president/CEO, West Cook YMCA. “Healthy Weight and Your Child will help children experience improved health outcomes and higher self-esteem, and families will feel empowered to make and support healthier choices.”

The 25-session program engages the whole family, so together they can understand how the home environment and other factors influence the choices that lead to a healthy weight. The program focuses on three elements—healthy eating, regular physical activity and behavior change.

"The prevalence of pediatric obesity is alarming," said Mary Crisostomo, APN, a pediatric nurse practitioner and clinical director of Loyola's pediatric weight management program. "We applaud the West Cook YMCA for offering this important opportunity for families to get healthy together and maintain their improved health through wonderful YMCA programming. This partnership is another way the community and healthcare providers can proactively advocate for our children to live long, happy, healthy lives."

Made up of groups of eight to 15 children and their parents/caregivers, the program creates a safe, fun and active environment for children and their families to explore and adopt proven methods for living a healthier lifestyle. Sessions are two hours in length, with the first hour delivered in a classroom setting and the second hour focused on physical activity.

Children eligible for the program must be between the ages of seven and 13, have a body mass index greater than or equal to the 95th percentile for their age, receive approval from their doctor or a healthcare provider and be accompanied by a parent or caregiver at every session.

The first session at Gottlieb Memorial Hospital will begin September 19, 2017 and the first session at West Cook YMCA will begin late September. For more information contact Jenny Kraak, Chronic Disease Program Coordinator, West Cook YMCA, at jkraak@westcookymca.org or 708-434-0249 or visit www.westcookymca.org/hwyc.