

by Michael O'Shea

## Early Exercise Pays Off

**P**HYSICAL ACTIVITY early in life may help protect kids from excessive fat gains later in childhood—even if their activity levels drop off. Scientists at the University of Iowa studied 333 children, first at age 5 and then again at 8 and 11. They found that the more active the kids were when they were young, the less body fat they had later on.

“Some of the 5-year-olds did 10 minutes or less a day, while others were active for 60 minutes or more,” says Dr. Kathleen Janz, a fellow of the American College of Sports Medicine. “When we measured the children at age 11, there was a 3.4-pound difference in fatness between kids in the most-

**Kids can reap the benefits for years**

active quartile and those in the least-active.” Every additional 10 minutes of exercise at age 5 resulted in a third of a pound less fat at 11, regardless of whether the activity level had been maintained.

“Small changes now may result in meaningful differences later,” Dr. Janz says. “Young children who are inactive are missing out on this protective ‘banking’ effect.”

Don't wait until your kids are overweight. Take advantage of their boundless energy and free time now. They'll thank you later.