

ECU Media Release

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Radical approach to childhood obesity

Edith Cowan University researchers have designed an innovative resistance exercise program to combat Australia's obesity epidemic.

ECU researchers Professor Rob Newton and Dr Mike McGuigan created the program to combat the obvious link between obesity in children and type II diabetes in later life..

Initially the program was part of a Telstra Foundation research grant for overweight children and is now a community program provided by the Vario Health Institute at ECU.

Both researchers say it's vital that some real action is taken on encouraging healthy lifestyles, good nutrition and plenty of exercise upon our children.

"In my experience, overweight children enjoy resistance exercise and tolerate it better than traditional running based activities," said Dr McGuigan.

"Due to their larger body mass, these children are typically stronger than their peers and therefore get positive feedback from this type of exercise.

"This helps to improve their self esteem, as well as reducing the possibility of them ending up with type II diabetes."

Resistance exercise, which includes the use of bodyweight and external resistance, offers an alternative to other modes of exercise that may not be tolerated as well by overweight children. This provides a relative psychological advantage in this type of activity, in contract to other activities that require aerobic ability or agility, which often places obese children at a disadvantage."

Dr McGuigan said that exercise not only decreases body fat but also enhances other aspects of our health.

"For example cardio-respiratory fitness and muscle strength are increased, which has important preventive effects for chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, type II diabetes, cancer and Alzheimer's disease," he said.

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