

Turn the page on healthy family living

by Julie Hunter



Something about a crisp new calendar inspires resolve for change. The holidays are over and a fresh new year lies ahead; it's a perfect time for the family — yes, the entire family — to embark together upon a course toward a healthier lifestyle.

According to Locke Ettinger, director of Dixie Regional Medical Center Rehabilitation Services, the strength-in-numbers aspect of the having the whole family involved can actually be the key to success.

"Health and fitness is a family affair," Ettinger says. "If one of the family members wants to lose weight, it would not be good to have the rest of the family scarfing down junk food." The full-family approach is even more important in raising the activity level. "If parents want their kids away from the computer or video games, they

need to get away from the television or other sedentary activities and get outside with them," he says.

With everyone involved, though, taking a gradient approach is important. Pauline Williams, clinical

nutrition manager at Primary Children's Medical Center, advises families to weave easier changes into everyday life rather than to take drastic turns.

"If you can make healthy eating and activity a 'matter of fact' way of life instead of a big production or discussion, you and your family will be way ahead of the curve," Williams says and urges parents not to overcomplicate. "The simplest things can make the biggest difference in the long run," she adds.

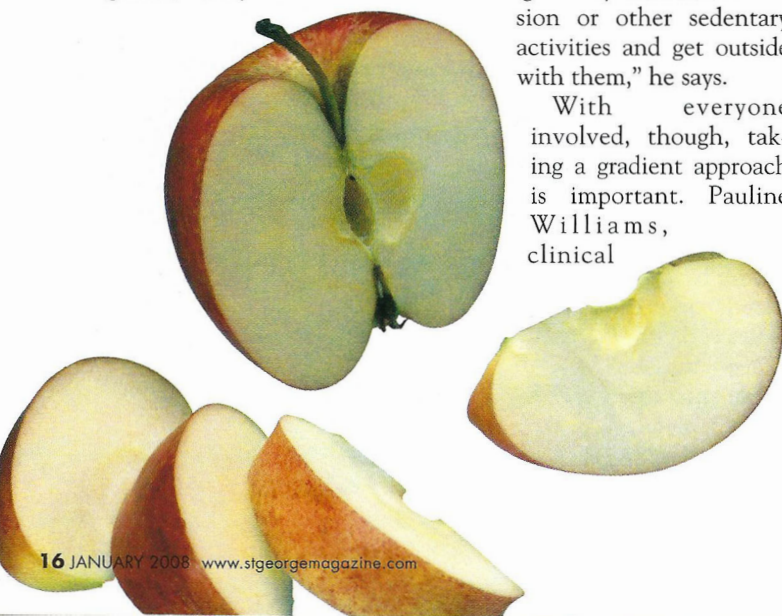
What are some of these simple things?

"Why do we live in Washington County?" Ettinger asks. "To get outside and enjoy ourselves. Our community has wonderful trails for walking or riding bikes." Ettinger advises making the simple, routine. "Go to the park and play some old familiar games like kick ball, Frisbee, kick the can, tag, hide and seek. Take a trip to Zion, go fishing, geocaching (a treasure hunt with a GPS)," he says.

Regardless of the activity, it's important to make it one that can be done together. "The old adage 'families that play together stay together' holds true for fitness and health," he says.

A big, yet simple step to eating healthier for everyone in the home can be to address the junk food/snack options available. Of course fruits and vegetables are always first on any nutritionist's list, but family members — especially kids — can find it difficult to make that leap from a bag of chips. Having some easy-to-grab fruit and vegetable options can be a good start.

Grocery store produce departments are offering more ready-to-go options such as packages of prepared carrots and snack-size



packages of carrots with ranch dip.

Apple and orange slices can be prepared and stored in the fridge (toss sliced apples with lemon juice to keep them from going brown) to make them an easier grab for snackers. Grocery stores also sell pre-sliced apples packaged with caramel or other dips to appeal to finickier palates.

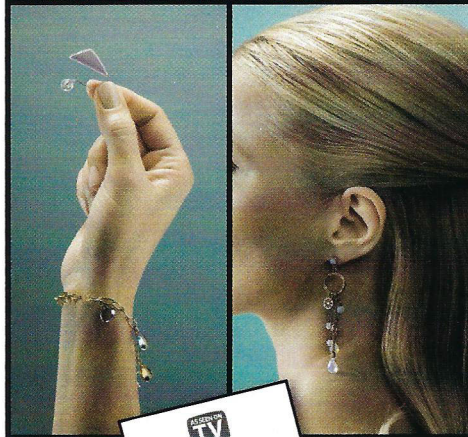
Peanut butter now also comes in single-serving containers. Kids can easily peel open a container, toss in the contents of a box of raisins and dip prepared celery sticks, apples or pretzels for a filling, nutritious after-school snack.

Frozen waffles or waffle sticks take a creamier and healthier turn when dipped into flavored yogurt rather than syrup. Granola bars of all types can also be dipped or crumbled into yogurt for a sweet, creamy, crunchy snack.

Low-to-no nutrition gummy fruit snacks can be tempered by the introduction of vitamin-rich dried fruits such as tart and tangy dried apricot pieces, Craisins, raisins or dried plums. These can be mixed with nuts and even chocolate pieces to create a go-to trail mix for snacking.

A little nutritional creativity and a lot of fun activities can be the key ingredients for a healthier future. **SGM**

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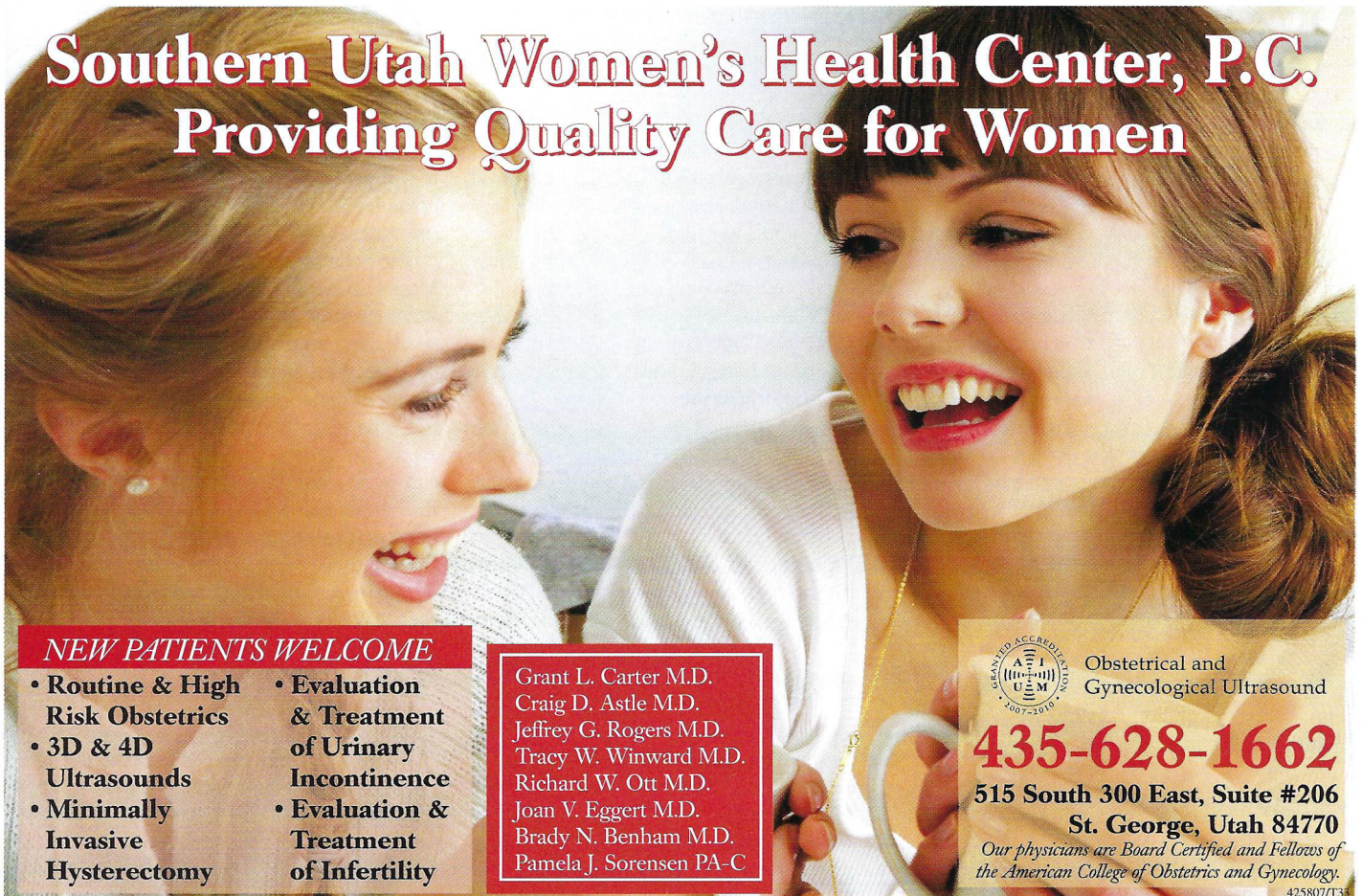
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