[IMAGE]

Playing a "Weighting" Game With Children’s Blood Pressure

High blood pressure has been linked to a variety of cardiovascular problems, none of which are positive. Studies have shown that if you have high blood pressure as a child, you are more likely to have high blood pressure as an adult, and that increased blood pressure levels may be related to an increase in body mass index (BMI). However, most blood pressure studies have measured levels in adults; few, if any, have looked at the role high blood pressure can play in children and teenagers.

To examine possible changes in blood pressure levels in children and adolescents, researchers compared data from two large national studies - one from 1988 to 1994, the other from 1999 to 2000. After adjusting for age, race and sex, the average child’s systolic blood pressure in 1999-2000 was 1.4 mmHg higher, and the diastolic blood pressure was 3.3 mmHg higher, compared with children from 1988-1994. The authors of the study also noted a strong link between systolic blood pressure and increased BMI, and theorized that the increase in blood pressure could at least partly be the result of an increased number of children in the 1999-2000 study being overweight or obese.

As the old saying goes, it’s never too late to change, and as the results of this study show, it’s never too early to change, either. Have your child’s blood pressure checked at his or her next examination, and talk with your doctor about ways to improve your child’s diet and fitness levels. Small adjustments to his or her diet and lifestyle now could pay off with years of healthy benefits in the future.

To read summaries of previous studies on pediatric health, go to www.chiroweb.com/find/archives/pediatrics.

Muntner P, He J, Cutler JA, et al. Trends in blood pressure among children and adolescents. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, May 5, 2004;291(17):2107-13.