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The Health Advisor

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Kids today are facing health challenges that were unheard of 20 years ago. While most of us are accustomed to thinking of heart disease as an adult health condition, in many cases it now originates during childhood. In fact, the beginning stages of heart disease - high cholesterol and high blood pressure - are now seen in kids as young as 5-10 years old. Parents, families, schools, doctors, churches - the entire Highbridge community - must work together to reverse the current health trend in our children.

New York City's Board of Education has taken a bold step toward improving the heart health of our children. Earlier this year, the department removed whole milk from the citywide school menu and replaced it with 1 percent (low-fat) and skim (fat-free) milk varieties. Whole milk is one of the largest sources of saturated fat - the kind of fat that contributes to heart disease - in children's diets. One percent and skim milk provide all the good-for-you nutrients, such as calcium and vitamin D, which are found in whole milk, but with fewer calories and little to no saturated fat. Look at the difference in fat and calories in just one cup of each:

Switching to 1 percent or skim milk is an easy way to help children reduce their risk of heart disease. Of course, this one change alone will not cure our children of heart disease, diabetes and obesity, but it will help our kids to establish healthier eating habits. As parents, care givers and role models, you can help by reinforcing this message at home.

Why not make the switch to 1 percent or skim milk in your home today? If children see and hear a consistent, healthy message in school and at home, they are more likely to accept it and incorporate it into a life-long habit.