



Shannon Miller

Shannon Miller Foundation

“Start When They Are Babies”

— Olympian Shannon Miller

It's not every day I get to e-chat with an Olympic medalist. With the 2010 Winter Olympics around the corner, talking with former gymnast Shannon Miller, seven-time Olympic medalist and nine-time World medalist, was a highlight among the typical school runs and grocery shopping.

A couple of things you should know about Shannon:

1. She's a baby mama to 3 month old Rocco — see him above, look, just look at those lips!
2. She's super active in fighting child obesity through the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation and her own Shannon Miller Foundation.

Shannon's son may be little, but she's already taking steps to make sure he doesn't end up a part of that epidemic. As she says, "Child obesity is not just a 'child' issue, it's a family issue. Everyone has to be involved."

Here's my talk with her:

First, the most important thing, tell us about your baby!

John Rocco Falconetti (Rocco) was born last October. He was named after his father (John) and great grandfather (Rocco). As a first-time mom, I had no idea what to expect. We have been very blessed and just adore Rocco. He's been sleeping through the night since seven weeks but he does have a tough time with acid reflux.

He spends most of his time eating and sleeping, but there is nothing like seeing him smile! He's such a sweetheart and has the cutest little boy face. The best is when he sticks his little lower lip out to pout. Unfortunately for him, it doesn't quite have the desired effect; we just giggle then run and get the camera.

Is Rocco too young yet for you to be concerned about childhood obesity?

Not at all. Right now I am making sure that my diet is healthy so that he is getting all the nutrients he needs while nursing. Soon we'll begin solid foods, but it will be awhile until I need to begin talking to him about good nutrition.

Right now my husband and I talk about how to keep him active and eating healthy so that when the time comes we are both on the same



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page. I'm planning to start a mommy and me class once he is walking. Of course, that's fun for him and me! I want Rocco to grow up thinking of physical activity as enjoyable. It should be.

We know that lack of physical exercise is a big part of this issue. Do you let Rocco watch TV?

We are not enthusiastic about him watching television until he is much older. Instead we play music and talk or read to him. We have discussed rules like no television on school nights and limited TV and computer time all around.

The DVR makes things very easy. If there is a show he just has to watch, it will allow us to limit the amount of technology and increase his amount of physical play time. We have also decided no TV at the dinner table and we have already made weekend walks part of our routine. The earlier the better. Children that are active tend to stay active through adulthood. Of course, Rocco is just along for the ride for a while.

How does a former gymnast, who is so fit and trim, become worried about obesity?

I never had real body image issues while I was competing. I felt strong and confident. It wasn't until I retired, stopped working out and formed bad eating habits that I had body image issues. It was having to battle those issues all alone that led me to be so passionate about helping other women.

My interest in childhood obesity came several years ago after reading several devastating articles about the epidemic. I looked into the issue further. In 2008, I began The Shannon Miller Foundation to fight childhood obesity to help raise awareness of this epidemic and get kids involved with physical fitness.

What is your favorite Winter Olympics Sport, the one you won't miss watching?

I absolutely love to watch figure skating! You can't beat the combination of beauty and power, not to mention the fun costumes. I think every little girl wants to dress up like a princess and dance on ice.

— By Cynthia Dermody

For more information go to
www.healthyweightcommit.org