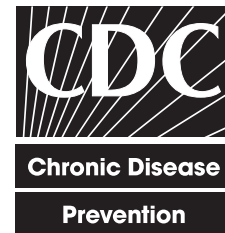


# Preventing Chronic Diseases: Investing Wisely in Health



## Preventing Obesity and Chronic Diseases

### Through Good Nutrition and Physical Activity

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
AND HUMAN SERVICES

#### The Reality

- Unhealthy diet and physical inactivity can contribute to or aggravate many chronic diseases and conditions, including type 2 diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, stroke, and some cancers.
- During the past 20 years, obesity rates among adults have risen significantly in the United States. In 2005–2006, data from the National Center for Health Statistics show that 34% of U.S. adults 20 years of age and older—over 72 million people—are obese.
- In 2005, few adults met the *Healthy People 2010* objectives for fruit and vegetable consumption; only 33% consumed fruit two or more times per day and even fewer (27%) consumed vegetables three or more times per day.
- Despite the proven benefits of physical activity, less than half of American adults in 2007 engaged in enough physical activity to provide health benefits.
- More than a quarter of children born in 2004 were never breastfed.
- The percentage of young people who are obese has approximately tripled since 1980. In 2003–2006, 16.3 % of children

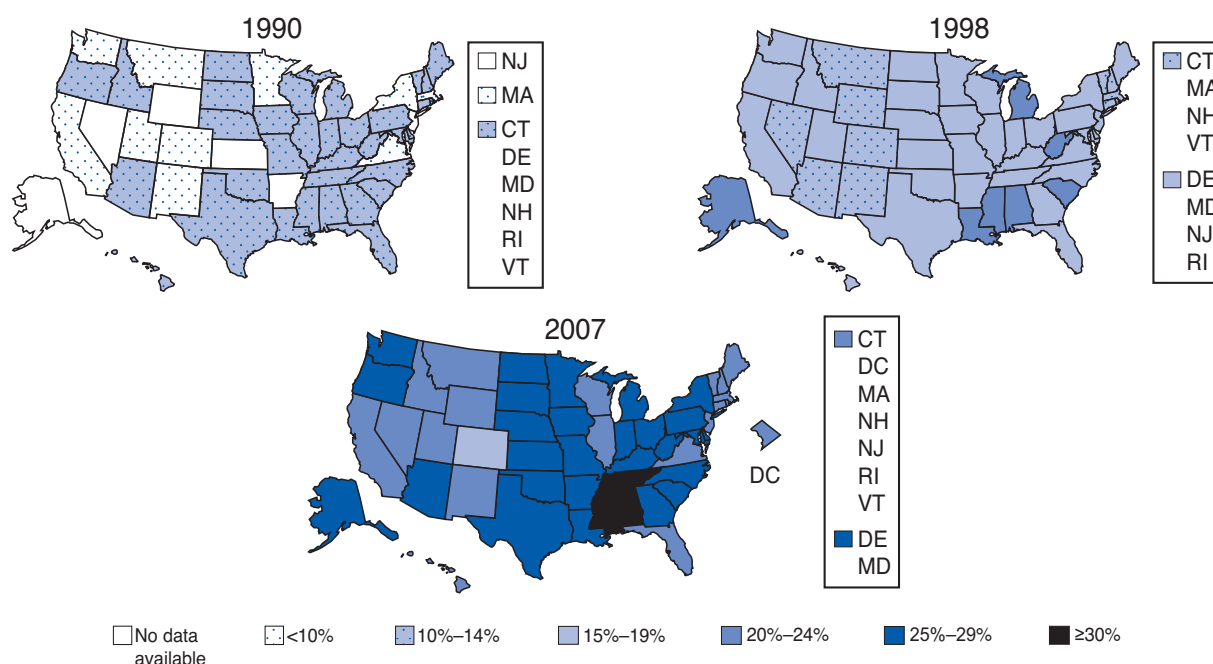
and adolescents aged 2–19 years had a body mass index greater than or equal to the 95th percentile for age and sex on the CDC growth charts.

- Over one third (34%) of adolescents in grades 9–12 had a soft drink (not diet) at least one time per day during the previous 7 days.
- In 2007, 65% of young people in grades 9–12 did not get the recommended amount of physical activity; 35% watched television for 3 or more hours on the average school day

#### The Cost of Obesity and Chronic Diseases

- Among children and adolescents, annual hospital costs related to obesity were \$127 million during 1997–1999 up from \$35 million during 1979–1981.
- In 2000, the total cost of obesity in the United States was estimated to be \$117 billion—\$61 billion for direct medical costs and \$56 billion for indirect costs.
- In 1996, \$31 billion of treatment costs (in year 2000 dollars) for cardiovascular disease among adults was related to overweight and obesity.

**Obesity\* Trends Among U.S. Adults BRFSS, 1990, 1998, 2007**



\* Body Mass Index (BMI)  $\geq 30$ , or about 30 lbs. overweight for 5'4" person.  
Source: CDC. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 1990, 1998, 2007.

## State Program in Action:

### Washington: Building a Healthy, Active Community

Nearly 60% of adults in the state of Washington are overweight or obese.<sup>†</sup> Improved eating habits and increased physical activity are keys to reversing this trend, but numerous barriers exist in communities throughout the state to making these healthful changes. Moses Lake is no exception. This small, central Washington city needed additional resources to make physical activity safe and accessible for all of its residents.



A series of interventions known collectively as Healthy Communities Moses Lake, encourages good nutrition and physical activity behaviors through environmental and policy change. Moses Lake and the surrounding Grant County adopted a Healthy Communities action plan. Specifically, the city revised its master plan to replace a railroad that runs through the downtown area with a path for biking and walking. The county put a plan in place for creating walking and biking trails alongside irrigation canals. New city and county zoning ordinances now require wider sidewalks that will increase accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.

The community garden project has been incorporated into the city's parks and recreation department work plan and is building capacity through integration with county nutrition activities and youth wellness team projects. The garden project has forged links with local school groups and chefs to make the garden both a food source and educational tool for the community.

Educating the community is a priority as well for the Moses Lake Breastfeeding Coalition, whose planned activities include discussions with local business about breastfeeding policies in the workplace, daycare-provider workshops and continuing educational forums, and various community advertising and promotion efforts.

As a result of the positive steps Moses Lake is taking, the neighboring city of Mount Vernon has adopted a Healthy Communities action plan of its own to encourage habits of healthy eating and physical activity.

<sup>†</sup> CDC. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2005.

## How Physical Activity and Weight Loss Save Money

- In 2000, health care costs associated with physical inactivity topped \$76 billion.
- If 10% of adults began a regular walking program, \$5.6 billion in heart disease costs could be saved.
- A sustained 10% weight loss will reduce an overweight person's lifetime medical costs by \$2,200–\$5,300 by lowering costs associated with hypertension, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and high cholesterol.

## Promising Approaches for Preventing Obesity

- Breastfeeding is associated with a reduced risk of obesity in children. Maternity care practices in hospitals and birthing centers can affect breastfeeding rates.
- Regular physical activity is an important component of weight control efforts. Proven community approaches to improve physical activity include:
  - ❑ Community wide campaigns.
  - ❑ Point-of-decision prompts such as signs placed by elevators and escalators that encourage people to use nearby stairs.
  - ❑ Physical education in schools.
  - ❑ Nonfamily social support interventions.
  - ❑ Individually adapted health behavior change programs.
  - ❑ Creating or improving access to places for physical activity combined with informational outreach.
  - ❑ Changing street-scale or community-scale urban design and land use policy and practice.
- Reducing the time children spend watching television appears to be effective for helping to control their weight.
- Replacing foods of high energy density (high amount of calories per weight of food) with those of lower energy density (such as fruits and vegetables) can be an important part of a weight management strategy.
- Decreased consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages appears to be associated with lower body mass index or weight.

## Hope for the Future

We can reduce obesity and other chronic diseases in this country by improving eating habits and increasing physical activity. Increasing opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity are just some of the steps we can take to promote the health of our nation.

For more information and references supporting these facts, please visit [www.cdc.gov/nccdphp](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp).