



**Date:** July 30, 2008

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### **State epidemiologist says data supports restaurant calorie listing**

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Dr. Mel Kohn, Oregon state epidemiologist, praised efforts requiring some Multnomah County restaurants to post the calorie contents of menu items.

Kohn, with the Oregon Department of Human Services State Public Health Division, said recent studies show that listing calorie counts on menus is an effective way to help control obesity.

"Obesity is the leading emerging public health issue that we face as a state," Kohn said. "If we don't address the rise in obesity, attempts at fixing our health care system are likely to be unsustainable."

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners, meeting as the county's board of health, has proposed a nutrition labeling regulation for about 90 chain restaurants in Portland and Multnomah County.

The proposal is similar to rules going into effect in Seattle and New York.

Kohn cited two recent Oregon reports that have recommended providing calorie information to customers at the point of purchase as a way to help prevent obesity.

The "Statewide Physical Activity and Nutrition Plan, 2007-2012," prepared by the Nutrition Council of Oregon and the Oregon Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity, and "Promoting Physical Activity and Healthy Eating Among Oregon's Youth," by the Oregon Health Policy Commission, both found health value in listing nutrition information for customers at the point of purchase.

Kohn said a study of customers at Subway restaurants, which provide nutrition information, found that diners who reported seeing the information averaged 52 fewer calories than those who did not report seeing it.

While 52 calories may not seem like much, Kohn said the impact is substantial when spread across the large number of customers who eat at chain restaurants.

“This study provides good evidence that nutritional information at the point of purchase influences consumers’ buying habits in a way that reduces their calorie intake,” he said.

Oregon health officials are considering establishing a statewide nutrition-labeling rule when the state’s food code is updated, beginning in 2009.

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