

Overweight and Obesity: A Vision for the Future

The Surgeon General identifies the following 15 activities as national priorities for immediate action. Individuals, families, communities, schools, worksites, health care, media, industry, organizations, and government must determine their role and take action to prevent and decrease overweight and obesity.

COMMUNICATION

The Nation must take an informed, sensitive approach to communicate with and educate the American people about health issues related to overweight and obesity. Everyone must work together to:

- Change the perception of overweight and obesity at all ages. The primary concern should be one of health and not appearance.
- Educate all expectant parents about the many benefits of breastfeeding.
 - Breastfed infants may be less likely to become overweight as they grow older.
 - Mothers who breastfeed may return to pre-pregnancy weight more quickly.
- Educate health care providers and health profession students in the prevention and treatment of overweight and obesity across the lifespan.
- Provide culturally appropriate education in schools and communities about healthy eating habits and regular physical activity, based on the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, for people of all ages. Emphasize the consumer's role in making wise food and physical activity choices.

ACTION

The Nation must take action to assist Americans in balancing healthful eating with regular physical activity. Individuals and groups across all settings must work in concert to:

- Ensure daily, quality physical education in all school grades. Such education can develop the knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviors, and confidence needed to be physically active for life.
- Reduce time spent watching television and in other similar sedentary behaviors.
- Build physical activity into regular routines and playtime for children and their families. Ensure that adults get at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week. Children should aim for at least 60 minutes.
- Create more opportunities for physical activity at worksites. Encourage all employers to make facilities and opportunities available for physical activity for all employees.
- Make community facilities available and accessible for physical activity for all people, including the elderly.
- Promote healthier food choices, including at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day, and reasonable portion sizes at home, in schools, at worksites, and in communities.
- Ensure that schools provide healthful foods and beverages on school campuses and at school events by:
 - Enforcing existing U.S. Department of Agriculture regulations that prohibit serving foods of minimal nutritional value during mealtimes in school food service areas, including in vending machines.
 - Adopting policies specifying that all foods and beverages available at school contribute toward eating patterns that are consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.
 - Providing more food options that are low in fat, calories, and added sugars such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat or nonfat dairy foods.
 - Reducing access to foods high in fat, calories, and added sugars and to excessive portion sizes.
- Create mechanisms for appropriate reimbursement for the prevention and treatment of overweight and obesity.

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

The Nation must invest in research that improves our understanding of the causes, prevention, and treatment of overweight and obesity. A concerted effort should be made to:

- Increase research on behavioral and environmental causes of overweight and obesity.
- Increase research and evaluation on prevention and treatment interventions for overweight and obesity and develop and disseminate best practice guidelines.
- Increase research on disparities in the prevalence of overweight and obesity among racial and ethnic, gender, socioeconomic, and age groups and use this research to identify effective and culturally appropriate interventions.