

NUTRITION, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, AND OBESITY

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

- Obesity has reached epidemic proportions. In the past 20 years, the prevalence of obesity has increased by more than 60% among adults and tripled in children and adolescents. Fifteen percent of children and adolescents are overweight and more than half of these children have at least one cardiovascular disease risk factor, such as elevated cholesterol or hypertension.
- The cost of diseases associated with obesity has been estimated at \$117 billion per year.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

CDC has expanded the national nutrition and physical activity program for preventing obesity and other chronic diseases. A comprehensive program design was developed to help states improve the effectiveness of their efforts to improve nutrition, increase physical activity, and prevent obesity and other chronic diseases. A new program announcement, published in the January 2003 *Federal Register*, produced 58 applications. Twenty applications were selected for funding in 2003. Seventeen of the approved programs are funded to build capacity, and three programs are funded for basic implementation activities. All 20 state programs will include activities aimed at primary prevention of obesity by providing the population with knowledge, skills, stronger intention, and greater self-efficacy. The programs go beyond individual-level efforts to address the need for supportive environments that provide opportunities for healthy eating and more physical activity. The interventions are designed to foster behavior change by mobilizing multiple levels of the social structure through individual and environmental strategies to affect and sustain a healthier lifestyle.

Example of Program in Action

With funding from CDC, the state of Washington is battling the obesity epidemic on multiple levels, from the behavior of individuals to the public health policies of communities and the state. This multi-faceted approach is being piloted in the small rural community of Moses Lake. The Moses Lake Healthy Communities Advisory Committee initially targeted three areas for immediate attention—creating a community garden open to all citizens; promoting, protecting, and supporting breast-feeding; and creating a network of linked trails and paths throughout the community. These projects have brought the community together to address a broad range of environmental and policy issues. The success of these initial efforts has spawned a second generation of initiatives and gone a long way toward justifying the Advisory Committee's motto: "Happy and Proud to Live Healthy in Moses Lake."

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

CDC plans to increase assistance to the existing 20 state programs through translating science to programs by

- Building a coalition to join public health and medical systems around patient self-management for obesity.
- Developing a research-to-practice series of briefs intended for public health practitioners. The first in the series will feature the relationship between fruit and vegetable consumption and weight.
- Implementing further guidance for applying physical activity interventions based on recommendations in *The Guide to Community Preventive Services*, for communities diverse in culture, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

For additional information on this or other CDC programs, visit www.cdc.gov/program

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