



January 14, 2011

Dear Colleague:

Overweight and obesity are among the most urgent health challenges facing our country today. Excess weight contributes to many of the leading causes of death in the United States, including heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and some types of cancer. More than a third of adults in the U.S. – over 72 million people – and 17% of children in the U.S. are obese. From 1980 to 2000, obesity rates for adults doubled and rates for children tripled.

While these high rates are starting to level off, the number of people who are above a healthy weight remains unacceptably high. To address the epidemic of overweight and obesity, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has identified obesity, nutrition, and physical activity as winnable battles. With additional effort and support for evidence-based, cost-effective strategies that we can implement now, we will have a significant impact on our nation's health.

Progress in these areas is being made by developing policy, systems, and environmental initiatives that help make healthy choices available, affordable, and easy. CDC supports several approaches to fight obesity, including improving the food environments in childcare, schools, hospitals, and workplaces; eliminating artificial trans fat in the food supply; reducing sodium levels in processed and restaurant foods; and increasing the number of people who meet recommended physical activity guidelines.

Innovative partnerships can also enable us to halt and reverse the obesity epidemic, such as First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move campaign, which is designed to solve the challenge of childhood obesity within a generation. Other CDC partnerships with organizations including the National Institutes of Health, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Healthy Eating Active Living Convergence Partnership are working to improve childhood obesity research as well as examine how best to improve access to healthful foods and develop active living environments.

CDC looks forward to working with you and all of our partners to support Americans in achieving a healthy weight by making nutritious foods and physical activity the easy, attractive, and affordable choice.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. Frieden, M.D., M.P.H.
Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention