

Health Awareness

A County Health Pool Publication



September 2004

Obesity: an increasing problem in U.S.

In the United States, approximately 127 million people (a staggering 64 percent) are considered overweight or obese. The number of overweight or obese individuals has increased dramatically from 1980 when 47 percent of the population was considered overweight or obese. Colorado actually leads the nation with the lowest percentage of overweight and obese citizens at 53 percent.

Overweight and obesity have been linked to increased risk for developing a variety of diseases including: type II diabetes, heart disease, some cancers, stroke, breathing problems, arthritis, and depression.

BMI Index

Overweight and obesity are usually determined by body mass index (BMI) which measures weight in relation to height. Although the BMI may not be accurate for extremely fit people, it is a good measure for most people. You can calculate your BMI using the following formula:

$$\text{BMI} = \left(\frac{\text{weight in lbs}}{\text{height in inches}^2} \right) \times 703$$

A healthy BMI is between 18.5 and 24.9. People with a BMI of 25 to 29.9 are considered overweight and those with a BMI of 30 or more are considered obese.

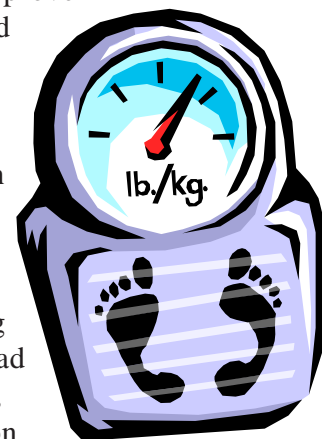


Increase in Deaths due to Poor Diet and Inactivity

In March 2004, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that 400,000 deaths in the U.S. were related to poor diet and physical inactivity in 2000. Only tobacco use caused more deaths (435,000). While most other major preventable causes of death declined or remained unchanged in the past decade, deaths related to poor diet and physical inactivity increased 33 percent.


Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson said, "Americans need to understand that overweight and obesity are literally killing us." He continued, "To know that poor eating habits and inactivity are on the verge of surpassing tobacco use as the leading cause of preventable death in America should motivate all Americans to take action to protect their health."

Secretary Thompson said that Americans don't need to go to extremes to improve their health and reverse the obesity epidemic. Rather, individuals can take small, achievable steps. He suggests taking the stairs instead of the elevator, and snacking on fruits and vegetables.



Energy Imbalance

People gain weight when they have an energy imbalance, that is, when they consume more energy as food (calories) than they expend through physical activity and metabolism.

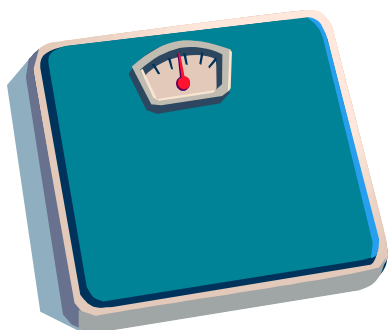
Several current trends contribute to this energy imbalance. For example, people are consuming more calories due to the abundance of inexpensive high calorie foods (such as soft drinks and fast food) and an increase in portion sizes. Labor saving devices (such as automobiles and television remote controls) and an increase in sedentary jobs contribute to the reduction in calories expended. 

Ideas for Reducing Overweight and Obesity

Although there is no simple solution to the problem of overweight and obesity, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment recommends the following measures to help reduce this public health problem.


Individuals can:

- Choose to be physically active during leisure time. Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days.
- Make physical activity a part of children's regular routine and playtime.
- Reduce time engaged in sedentary activities such as watching television.
- Make healthy personal food choices. Eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables and 6 servings of grains each day. Limit fats and sugars, and eat reasonable portion sizes.
- Breastfeed infants. Breastfed babies are less likely to become overweight or obese and mothers who breastfeed tend to return to their pre-pregnancy weight more quickly.



Communities can:


- Change the perception of overweight and obesity at all ages from being a cosmetic problem to being a health problem.
- Create community environments that promote physical activity by providing sidewalks, biking and jogging trails, public recreation centers, etc.

- Create more opportunities for physical activity at worksites (provide onsite exercise facilities, allow ample time for walking during lunch and other breaks).
- Promote healthy food choices at home, in schools, at worksites, and in communities.
- Provide quality physical education in all school grades everyday. 



Health coverage for full-time college students

The County Health Pool offers health benefits to dependents aged 19 to 25 who are enrolled as full-time students in an accredited college or university.

To ensure that your college student dependents are covered, please fill out **full time student status verification form** and return it to the County Health Pool. 

Renewal Meeting Scheduled for Sept. 16

The County Health Pool's Board and Members Renewal Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 16 at 10:00 a.m. The meeting will take place at CTSI's 800 Grant Street office in Denver.

CHP staff will present the proposed rate structure for the 2005 plan year. The CHP Board will discuss the proposed rate

structure and will weigh the costs and benefits of making changes to the plan for 2005.

The CHP Board will make a final determination about the plan and the rates for the 2005 plan year at this meeting.

CHP encourages member entities to attend this meeting.