

Childhood Obesity: A Public Health Epidemic

SCOPE OF PROBLEM IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

2000 Study

- 17 % of children 2 – 5 years of age were overweight; 16 % were at risk for overweight
- 24% of children 5 –11 years of age were overweight; 20 % were at risk for overweight
- 23% of adolescents 12-19 years of age were overweight; 21% were at risk for overweight

Source: 2000 Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance Study—based on body mass index (BMI) weight divided by height squared (metric calculations). Statistics for CHDP population only (Medi-Cal and families below 220% FPL)

WHY SHOULD WE BE CONCERNED?

- Health risks of overweight include: diabetes, sleep apnea, joint problems, heart disease, high blood pressure, low self esteem.
- A minimum of 310,000 Americans die each year as a result of diseases directly linked to unhealthy eating and inactivity, more than as a result of tobacco, alcohol or drugs, firearms, motor vehicle accidents.
- 70 to 80% of overweight adolescents will continue to be overweight adults
- Estimated cost for treatment of obesity related illnesses = \$260 billion in 2010

The solution is simple math, but not easy to accomplish! Calories in need to equal calories out. Kids are consuming more calories than they are expending.

Causes are multifaceted:

- **Consuming more calories**—average caloric intake jumped from 1876 to 2043 in past 15 years;
- **Soda consumption**—teens drink twice as much soda as milk, 12 oz soda = 150 calories and the Big Gulp = 36 teaspoons of sugar
- **Increased consumption of high sugar, high fat snack foods**—2000 new products introduced by the late 1980's
- **Eating more meals out**—38% of meals not prepared at home
- **Decreased physical activity**—1 in 5 children walk to school today; schools having to drop PE requirements; car culture; perception and reality of unsafe neighborhoods.
- **Infrastructure that does not support exercise** – jurisdictions lack the bike and walking paths necessary. Safety is perceived as a barrier to getting out and exercising.
- **School budgets** – school districts are required to meet more requirements while funding is limited. Many districts do not have the funds for good PE programs or better school lunches.
- **Increased screen viewing time**—the average child ages 8–18 spends more than 3 hours a day watching TV and another 3-4 hours with other media, i.e. computer and video games
- **Role of the media**—\$33 billion is spent on promoting fast food, snack foods and soft drinks and millions more on lobbying efforts undermining any positive parental influence.

For more information, check out this websites:

- **Childhood obesity information:** <http://www.obesity.org/subs/childhood/>,
<http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content2/obesity.html>
- **Growth Charts:** <http://www.cdc.gov/growthcharts/>
- **Physical Activity:** http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/stats/us_physical_activity/index.htm
- **Walkable Communities:** <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/03241/216312.stm>
- **American Dietetic Association:** www.eatright.org
- **WIC:** <http://www.calwic.org/>
- **Breastfeeding information:** <http://www.lalecheleague.org/bfinfo.html>
- **National Institute of Health:**
<http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health/nutrit/pubs/tipsforadults/tipsforadults.htm>