



Monday, April 2, 2012
National Public Health Week · www.nphw.org

A healthier America begins with active living and healthy eating

SOMETIMES THE SMALLEST CHANGE CAN MAKE THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE. If we take small actions, our communities, homes and families will see the large benefits of preventive care and grow the movement. Eating healthy and engaging in regular physical activity are just a few of the ways people can stay healthy. Yet each year, despite these easy ways to stay healthy, nearly 1 million Americans die from diseases that could have been prevented.

Eating less, eating healthier and exercising regularly can go a long way toward helping Americans lessen their risk from deaths that could have been prevented, such as heart disease, cancer and stroke. Even the smallest preventive changes and initiatives can make a big difference in living healthier lives.

Did You Know?

- Fewer than 15 percent of adults and 10 percent of adolescents eat the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables each day.²⁷
- More than two-thirds of the adult population is overweight or obese. Approximately one in five children are overweight or obese by the time they reach their sixth birthday, and over half of obese children became overweight at or before age 2.²⁸
- Physical inactivity is a primary contributor to one-third of the adult population being overweight or obese and one in six children and adolescents being obese.²⁹
- At least 40 percent of adults and 80 percent of adolescents do not meet the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans.³⁰
- In combination with healthy eating, physical activity can help prevent a range of chronic diseases, including heart disease, cancer and stroke, which are the three leading causes of death in America.³¹

²⁷ Kimmons J, Gillespie C, Seymour J, Serdula M, Blanck HM. Fruit and vegetable intake among adolescents and adults in the United States: percentage meeting individualized recommendations. *Medscape J Med.* 2009;11(1):26.

²⁸ Ogden CL, Carroll MD. Prevalence of Obesity Among Children and Adolescents: United States, Trends 1963–1965 Through 2007–2008. 2010.

²⁹ Ogden CL, Carroll MD. Prevalence of Overweight, Obesity, and Extreme Obesity Among Adults: United States, Trends 1976–1980 Through 2007–2008. NCHS Health E-Stat. June 2010.

³⁰ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. 2008 Physical activity guidelines for Americans. Washington: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2008.

³¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Physical Activity and Health: The Benefits of Physical Activity. Web site: <http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/health/index.html>

National Public Health Week · April 2–8, 2012 · www.nphw.org

Together we can change these statistics and live longer and healthier lives. Small changes can help yourself, your family and your community. Taking action, both big and small, to promote active living and healthy eating is more than just common sense — it works. Here are just a few examples:

Start small...

- ✓ Eat more fruits and vegetables, consume less sugar and fat, eat healthier snacks, watch portion size and eat together as a family.
- ✓ Eat less by avoiding oversized portions, make half of the plate fruits and vegetables, make at least half of the grains whole grains, switch to fat-free or low-fat (1 percent) milk, choose foods with less sodium and drink water instead of sugary drinks.
- ✓ Take part in Let's Move! activities. Let's Move!, launched by first lady Michelle Obama, is a comprehensive initiative dedicated to solving the problem of obesity within a generation.
- ✓ Engage in physical activity every day. Aim for a total of 60 minutes for children, 30 minutes for adults.
- ✓ Consider following the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommendations that children under 2 years old not watch any TV and that those older than 2 watch no more than one to two hours a day of quality programming.³²
- ✓ Supplement aerobic activities with muscle strengthening activities that involve all major muscle groups on two or more days a week.
- ✓ Support walk and bike-to-school programs and work with local governments to make decisions about selecting school sites that can promote physical activity.
- ✓ Plan family trips to parks and other outdoor locations.
- ✓ Post information about NPHW on your Facebook page, blog or Twitter account and share how you are working to live a more active and healthier life with your friends.
- ✓ Submit a letter to the editor to your local newspaper in response to a recent article that underscores the importance of active living and healthy eating during NPHW and beyond.

Think big...

- ✓ Create a local movement: start a farmers market, a food co-op, a community garden, a demonstration kitchen, a supper club or a canning circle.
- ✓ Lead or convene city, county and regional food policy councils to assess local community needs and expand programs (e.g., community gardens, farmer's markets) that bring healthy foods, especially locally grown fruits and vegetables, to schools, businesses and communities.
- ✓ Encourage local restaurants to provide nutrition information to customers on their menus and limit marketing of unhealthy food to children and youth.
- ✓ Work with schools to add more physical activity into the school day, including additional physical education classes, before- and after-school programs, recess and opening school facilities for student and family recreation in the late afternoon and evening.
- ✓ Mayors and community leaders can promote physical fitness by working to increase safe routes for kids to walk and ride to school; revitalizing parks, playgrounds and community centers; and providing fun and affordable sports and fitness programs.

There is much more you can do to help promote active living and healthy eating beyond these actions. By raising awareness of prevention within your community during National Public Health Week, you can help members of your community live healthier and longer lives.

³² Pediatrics. Policy Statement—Media Education. September 27, 2010. Page: 4. Web site: <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2010/09/27/peds.2010-1636.full.pdf+html>