

## Working Together to Stop the Trend

An estimated 64 percent of Americans are overweight or obese. Fifteen percent of children and teens age 6–19 are overweight, up from 5% in 1980. An overweight adult or child is at increased risk of Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and osteoarthritis. Obesity related health problems are costing as much as \$177 billion dollars a year.

Why are we as a nation becoming more overweight and obese? Food supply estimates indicate that Americans' average daily calorie consumption in 2000 was 12%, or roughly 300 calories, higher than in 1985. Eating away from home and larger portion sizes may be contributors to the additional calories being consumed. In addition to the higher calorie consumption, few Americans exercise regularly or are physically active on a regular basis. The obesity epidemic is environmentally driven not genetically driven. Quality physical education and school nutrition programs are a critical piece to reduce the growing rate of overweight children.



*More than 95% of all 5–17 year olds are enrolled in school. Therefore, schools are ideally suited to provide students the skills and support they need to adopt healthy eating behaviors and to be physically active for life.*

### Poor Eating Habits

Our culture's emphasis on weight without the balance of a total health message is affecting even young children. Children as young as 6 have been treated for obsessions with dieting and weight. A national survey of 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students found that while trying to lose weight:

- 32% skipped meals
- 22% fasted
- 7% used diet pills
- 5% induced vomiting after meals
- 3% used laxatives.

### Too Little Physical Activity

- Fewer than 25% of children get vigorous daily activity.
- Only 19% of all high school students are physically active for at least 20 minutes in a daily physical education class even though 93% of them say they enjoy physical education in school.

*A child-friendly dining room with adequate time for students to eat, relax and socialize enhances the school climate and progress toward educational goals.*

### Health Promotion— A Community Effort

Programs that promote healthy eating and physical activity behaviors during childhood and adolescence may not only prevent some of the leading causes of illness and death but also decrease direct healthcare costs and improve quality of life.

## For Your Own Health

Make healthy choices that fit your lifestyle so you can do the things you want to do.

### Be Realistic

Make small changes over time in what you eat and your level of activity. After all, small steps work better than giant leaps.

### Be Adventurous

Expand your tastes to enjoy a variety of foods.

### Be Flexible

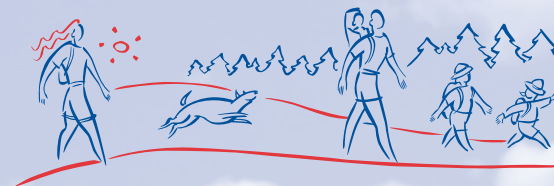
Balance what you eat and the physical activity you do over several days. No need to worry about just one meal or one day.

### Be Sensible

Enjoy all foods; just don't overdo it.

### Be Active

Walk the dog; don't just watch the dog walk.



*Remember—  
children learn by example!*

This message was developed by the Colorado Department of Education Nutrition Unit (303.866.6654) in cooperation with the Colorado School Food Service Association, Colorado Assn. for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's Physical Activity and Nutrition (COPAN) Program and Action For Healthy Kids (AFHK), School Site Task Force

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# Helping Raise Healthy Children



*Realizing the importance  
of school nutrition  
and physical education programs*

## Nutrition

Establishing healthy eating habits at a young age is critical because changing poor eating patterns in adulthood can be difficult. School breakfast and lunch programs provide opportunities to practice healthy eating. Nationally, on any given day, approximately 60% of students eat school lunch and 10% of students eat school breakfast. These students are deciding what to eat in two-thirds of their meals for the day.



### Benefits of Healthy Eating

- Helps young people grow, develop, and do well in school.
- Prevents childhood and adolescent health problems such as obesity, eating disorders, dental cavities, and iron deficiency anemia.
- Helps prevent health problems later in life, including heart disease, cancer, and stroke—the three leading causes of death.



### What is healthy eating?

- Eating a variety of foods
- Eating more fruits, vegetables and whole grains
- Eating lower fat foods more often
- Choosing sensible portions

Messages for healthy eating are based upon the USDA and Health and Human Services Dietary Guidelines for Americans. <http://www.usda.gov/cnpp/>

*Making healthy food choices helps students to grow, develop and be ready to learn.*

## Physical Activity

Young people can build healthy bodies and create healthy lifestyles by having fun while being physically active every day. School and community programs can help young people get active and stay active.



### Benefits of Regular Physical Activity

- Helps build healthy bones and muscles, improving strength and endurance.
- Helps control weight, combats Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease that begin in preadolescents. The Surgeon General report states that, “lack of physical activity is as detrimental to ones health as smoking” ...
- Reduces anxiety and stress and increases self-esteem.
- Supports academic success; kids are healthy, alert and live a drug-free lifestyle with prospects of improving performance and health-related fitness.
- Physical Activity is good not only for the heart but also for the brain, feeding it glucose and oxygen, and increasing nerve connections, all of which makes it easier for children of all ages to learn.

In addition, young people say they like physical activity because it is fun; they do it with friends; and it helps them learn skills, stay in shape, and look better.

### How much physical activity do young people need?

Everyone can benefit from a moderate amount of physical activity every day. Young people can select activities they enjoy that fit into their daily lives. Examples include ...

- Walking, bicycling, dancing, snowboarding, rollerblading, jumping rope or participating in a sport.



## Parents, Guardians, and Educators can ...

- Advocate for a healthy school nutrition and physical activity environment for your children.
- Advocate for shared local/state/federal funding for the quality school nutrition and physical education programs.
- Establish healthy snack policies for the classroom, after school programs, school parties and special events. If candy and soda are not made readily available, kids will eat less of these foods.
- Insist that schools provide nutrition education and physical activity for students of all ages.
- Support the school nutrition and physical education programs and encourage your children to participate.
- Volunteer to participate on the school health council.
- Identify ways to raise money for the school other than selling foods.
- Plan to have family meals at home. Meals eaten at home are more nutritious than meals eaten out or anywhere else.

- Reinforce the messages about nutrition and physical activity that your children learn in school by planning family activities that include physical activity and healthy food choices.
- Teach by example. Physically active parents are more likely to have children who are physically active.



*Parents, guardians, and educators of children play vital roles in creating a community that promotes healthful eating and physical activity.*



### Resources

Colorado Physical Activity and Nutrition Program and Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK) School Site State Plan [http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/pp/COPAN/COPAN\\_2010.pdf](http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/pp/COPAN/COPAN_2010.pdf)  
Changing the Scene, a guide for local action, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/>  
Fit Healthy and Ready to Learn, a school health policy guide, [nasbe.org](http://nasbe.org)