

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & NUTRITION



Physical  
Activity  
& Nutrition  
2003

### WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

People tend to think of being overweight and obesity as strictly a personal matter, but there is much that communities can and should do to address this problem.

Obesity may soon cause as much preventable disease and death as cigarette smoking. It is associated with approximately 300,000 U.S. deaths and costs \$117 billion dollars each year.<sup>1</sup>

Will-power is not enough; reversing the obesity epidemic will take a combination of individual effort, family support, and community action.

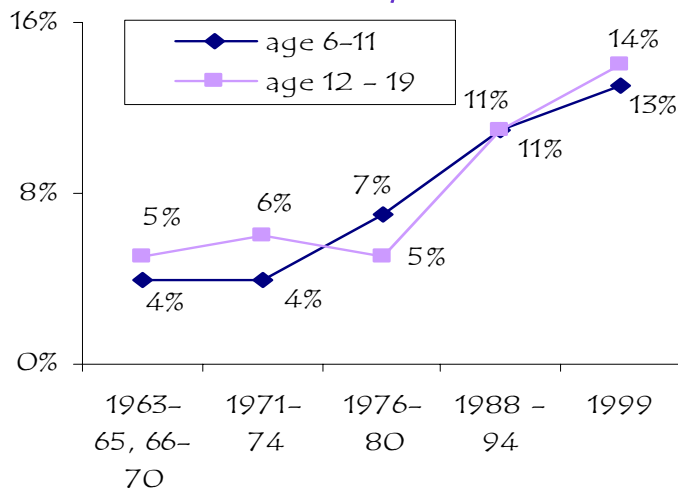
### As obesity rates rise, so do the risks

The number of overweight youth, ages 6-19, has dramatically increased since 1976.<sup>2</sup> Overweight youth are at a greater risk of developing serious, often life-threatening conditions such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, sleep apnea, arthritis, and cancer at an earlier age. Unhealthy diets and too little physical activity are the main reasons for this increase.

Some reasons that children are inactive and not eating well include:

- Popularity of fast foods and super-sized portions
- Lack of physically active recreational programs and activities for teens
- Traffic and safety concerns; lack of sidewalks and bike paths discourage outside play and encourages reliance on cars for transportation

The Prevalence of Obesity in Youth<sup>3</sup>



### Youth are less physically active<sup>3</sup>

Less than one half of students are active on most days. Only 32% of Richfield 6<sup>th</sup> graders, 50% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders, and 40% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders report being active for at least 30 minutes a day on five or more days per week.

Television viewing is the number one contributor to inactivity and obesity among youth. Since the 1960s and 70s, children's viewing time has doubled.<sup>3</sup>

Over 50% of Richfield 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders report between 3-10 hours of screen time (TV, video, or computer) per week; and about 25% of 6<sup>th</sup> graders and 29% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders report 11 hours or more of screen time.



- Widespread availability of high-fat, high-sugar snacks and beverages where youth gather
- Highly competitive sports that start at a young age and exclude all but the best athletes



## What can you do?

### Be a role model.

Be active and live a healthy lifestyle; invite your children to walk, bike, or do other activities with you.

Limit the number of hours your children spend on sedentary activities such as watching TV and playing video/computer games.

Make sure you have healthy foods and snacks available at home.

Encourage your children to walk or bike, when possible, rather than ride in a car.

Encourage schools, after-school programs, and youth organizations to provide healthy snacks and beverage options.

Advocate for convenient, safe, and adequate places for young people to play and take part in physical activity programs.

Promote intramural sports and other non-competitive physical activities for youth.

Increase public awareness of the safety of neighborhoods; lobby for more sidewalks, bike paths, and recreational facilities.

Encourage schools to incorporate daily physical activity into the school curriculum and/or schedule.

For more information on physical activity & nutrition, contact Joan Bulfer, 952/563-8982 or via email: [jbulfer@ci.bloomington.mn.us](mailto:jbulfer@ci.bloomington.mn.us)

## Soda pop up, milk down; calories up, calcium down

Youth are consuming more pop and less milk, resulting in critically low amounts of dietary calcium and excess calories.

Over the past 30 years, milk consumption declined steadily among youth; pop consumption increased dramatically, as did fruit-flavored drinks. This change in beverage consumption is of great concern.

Many youth are not consuming the recommended levels of calcium to prevent osteoporosis. This problem is especially critical in girls. In Richfield, 19% of 6<sup>th</sup> grade girls reported drinking no milk the day before the student survey, and 32% of 9<sup>th</sup> grade girls had no milk on the previous day.<sup>3</sup>

## Unhealthy weight-loss practices have been reported among youth<sup>3</sup>

Concerns about body weight can lead adolescents to use unhealthy weight-loss practices including skipping meals or fasting, smoking, vomiting, using diet pills or speed, and using laxatives.

- 42% of 9<sup>th</sup> grade girls and 49% of 12<sup>th</sup> grade girls reported using unhealthy weight-loss practices.
- 18% of 9<sup>th</sup> grade boys and 23% of 12<sup>th</sup> grade boys also reported these behaviors.
- Many of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade girls who smoke 20 or more cigarettes per month did so to control their weight.

## What has TCP done?

Tri-City Partners has formed a Physical Activity & Nutrition work group to study and take action on youth nutrition and physical activity issues. The goals of the group are:

- 1) increase physical activity opportunities for middle school youth
- 2) encourage school and community policies and environments that promote healthy food and beverage options for youth

Staff members from schools, community education, public health, police, and recreation personnel are working together with community members to help identify barriers to increase physical activity and good nutrition, and to create community-based solutions.

Healthy Youth Grants are available through the Richfield Foundation to schools and community groups for nutrition and physical activity initiatives benefiting middle and high school youth.

1 - USDHHS, Surgeon General's call to action to prevent and decrease overweight and obesity, 2001

2 - National Health Ex

3 - 2001 Minnesota Student Survey, Richfield



The majority of youth do not consume five fruits and vegetables every day.

Fruits and vegetables are nutrient-packed, low-calorie, and essential for adolescents to meet their nutrient requirements.

Eating five or more fruits and vegetables every day is associated with a lower risk of cancer and heart disease.

In Richfield, twenty-one percent of 6<sup>th</sup> graders and 16% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders meet this recommendation.<sup>3</sup>

## OUR MISSION:



The mission of Tri-City Partners for Healthy Youth and Communities is to promote health, reduce risks, and build assets in our youth and communities. Tri-City Partners work with organizations, groups, and concerned citizens on projects to reduce high-risk behaviors and enhance healthy youth development. Information cards are available for the areas of youth and tobacco, alcohol and other drugs, teen pregnancy prevention, and physical activity and nutrition for the cities of Bloomington, Edina, and Richfield. Funding for these activities has been provided by the Minnesota Department of Health and the Minnesota Tobacco Endowment.