



HEALTHY EATING & ACTIVE LIVING



Factors That Influence Healthy Lifestyles

Our environments – where we live, work, learn, shop, and play – have a big influence on what we eat and how active we are. Many Americans – adults and kids alike – live in environments that make it harder to choose healthy foods and be physically active. Following are some of the factors influencing healthy eating and active living.

Community Barriers to Healthy Eating and Active Living

Many communities do not have enough safe and accessible places for people to be physically active, indoors and out.

- People who live in the most walkable neighborhoods are nearly 2½ times more likely to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity each day as individuals who live in the least walkable neighborhoods.
- Public transit users take 30 percent more steps daily than people who rely on cars.
- 41.5 percent of people with safe places to walk meet recommended activity levels, compared with 27.4 percent of people with no place to walk.

In addition, healthy foods are often not available or affordable, while unhealthy foods are inexpensive, easy to get, and heavily marketed.

- Twenty-three million people live in food deserts with limited access to healthy, affordable foods; more than half of them are low-income.
- Those living in neighborhoods with no supermarkets and only having access to convenience stores, smaller grocery stores, or both tend to have the highest rates of obesity compared to others with better access.
- Check-out aisles at retail stores also encourage purchases of unhealthy products. Even non-food stores, like bookstores, toy stores, hardware stores, and home goods stores, push foods and beverages at checkout.
- Portion sizes of many foods have grown over the past few decades, contributing to people eating more calories than they need (or than they realize they are eating).

Food and Beverage Marketing to Kids

The majority of children consume diets too low in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains and too high in sodium, saturated fats, and added sugars. Many of the foods and beverages that are heavily marketed to children contribute to poor diet quality, high-calorie intake, and excess weight gain.

- According to the Institute of Medicine, food and beverage advertising affects children's food preferences, purchase requests, beliefs, and short-term consumption.
- Food and beverage companies spend more than \$1.7 billion a year on marketing to kids, and only a tiny fraction of that amount (\$280 million) is for healthy products.
- Companies target kids in many ways, including through food packaging; school vending machines; recreation league scoreboards; toys, giveaways and contests; product placement in commercials, movies, TV shows, and video games; and on restaurant menus.
- Food and beverage companies even reach children in schools. In 2012, 70 percent of elementary and middle school students and 90 percent of high school students attended schools with food marketing.

Physical Education and Physical Activity in Schools

For optimal health, children and adolescents should get at least an hour of physical activity each day, part of which can be achieved through quality physical education at school. However, in many cases, schools are failing to provide students adequate physical education and opportunities for physical activity throughout their day.

- Children's physical activity levels drop dramatically between ages 9-15.
- Only 3.8 percent of elementary, 7.9 percent of middle, and 2.1 percent of high schools provide daily physical education or its equivalent for the entire school year.
- Twenty-two percent of schools do not require students to take any physical education at all.
- Only 6 percent of elementary school students and 2 percent of middle and high school students are in a district with a wellness policy that adheres to the recommended weekly amounts of physical education.

Classroom-based physical activity, recess, walking or biking to school, and before- and after-school physical activity are all important ways to help kids be more active. These activities should supplement, but not substitute for, physical activity provided through physical education.

Sugary Drinks

While there are many types of foods and beverages that can contribute to an unhealthy diet, sugary drinks are a major source of added sugar and excess calories in the diets of children and adults.

- Sugary drinks, like sodas, fruit juices, energy drinks, and sports drinks, have been shown to contribute significantly to obesity, as well as other chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes and heart disease.
- One study found that for each additional 12-ounce soda children drank each day, the odds of becoming obese increased by 60 percent.
- Sugary drinks are aggressively marketed to kids and teens, particularly to African American and Latino youth – populations that already suffer from very high rates of obesity and diet-related chronic diseases.
- While sugary drinks are not directly linked to cancer risk, they contribute to obesity, which in turn increases the risk of the disease. Consumption of sugary drinks, especially by kids, is a major public health concern.

Resources

Community Barriers to Healthy Eating and Active Living

- ACS CAN Fact Sheet on State and Local Policies to Promote Active Transportation and Recreation in Communities: <http://www.acscan.org/content/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Active%20Transport-Fact%20Sheet-Rev%20Final%201-22-16.pdf>
- Center for Science in the Public Interest – (Un)Healthy Checkout: <http://cspinet.org/healthycheckout/>

Food and Beverage Marketing to Kids

Food Marketing Workgroup

- Food Marketing 101: <http://www.foodmarketing.org/resources/food-marketing-101/>.
- Food marketing to children in school: Reading, writing, and a candy ad? <http://www.foodmarketing.org/resources/food-marketing-in-schools/marketing-of-low-nutrition-foods-and-beverages-in-schools/>

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Healthy Eating Research program – Recommendations for Responsible Food Marketing to Children

- Report: <http://healthyeatingresearch.org/research/recommendations-for-responsible-food-marketing-to-children/>
- Infographic: <http://healthyeatingresearch.org/research/infographic-responsible-food-marketing-to-children/>
- Issue Brief: <http://healthyeatingresearch.org/research/recommendations-for-responsible-food-marketing-to-children-issue-brief/>

Physical Education and Physical Activity in Schools

- ACS CAN Fact Sheet on Physical Education in Schools: <http://www.acscan.org/content/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/PE-in-Schools-Fact-Sheet-from-ACS-ADA-AHA.pdf>

Sugary Drinks

- Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health – Sugary Drinks and Obesity Fact Sheet: <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/sugary-drinks-fact-sheet/#references>
- Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity – Sugary Drink Facts: http://sugarydrinkfacts.org/sugary_drink_facts_in_brief.aspx



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