

NUTRITION, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, & OBESITY

Background

In 2023, 40.3% of adults in the United States were obese. Fewer than one in ten U.S. children and adults eat the recommended daily serving of vegetables. Ultra-processed foods currently make up 60% of adult diets and approximately 70% of children's diets, and 90% of Americans eat more sodium than is recommended. In 2020, only a quarter of American adults and a fifth of adolescents participated in enough healthy aerobic physical activity. Only two in five young adults are weight-eligible and physically prepared for basic military training. Lack of quality nutrition and physical activity have become a norm for a vast majority of Americans; however, simple lifestyle and diet changes can help to prevent obesity and related health issues.

CDC Programs Addressing Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Obesity

CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity (DNPAO) implements programs to improve American's diet and lifestyle habits by improving nutrition and increasing physical activity across an individual's lifespan, with a special focus on young children ages zero to five years. DNPAO supports evidence-based interventions and invests in efforts to support healthy eating, active living, and healthy weight for all people through the State Physical Activity and Nutrition Program (SPAN). SPAN uses interventions that support good nutrition, safe and accessible physical activity, healthy early childhood education environments, and breastfeeding to:

- Reduce the number of adults, adolescents, and children who have obesity.
- Increase the number of vegetables in Americans' diets.
- Increase the proportion of adults who engage in physical activity.
- Increase the number of states with nutrition and physical activity standards for early care and education centers.
- Support breastfeeding.
- Implement food services guidelines to promote safe and healthy food choices.

Current funding only allows DNPAO to fund 17 SPAN states. Increased funding would allow SPAN to expand to all 50 states and nine territories, allowing more states to implement programs to improve health and reduce the financial burden of poor diet and exercise on the entire U.S. healthcare system.

The Cost of Poor Nutrition, Physical Inactivity, & Obesity

- Obesity costs the U.S. healthcare system \$190.2 billion a year, accounting for nearly 21% of the country's annual medical spending.
- Obesity and related chronic diseases cost employers up to \$93 billion per year in health insurance claims.
- Approximately 20% of the costs associated with heart disease, stroke, and diabetes are due to poor diet, which means poor eating habits account for \$50 billion annually in healthcare costs.

Preventing Obesity Through Nutrition and Physical Activity

A sustained and sufficient investment in nutrition and physical activity interventions through state-based public health programs across all states can improve health outcomes and quality of life and help individuals maintain optimal health at every age.

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