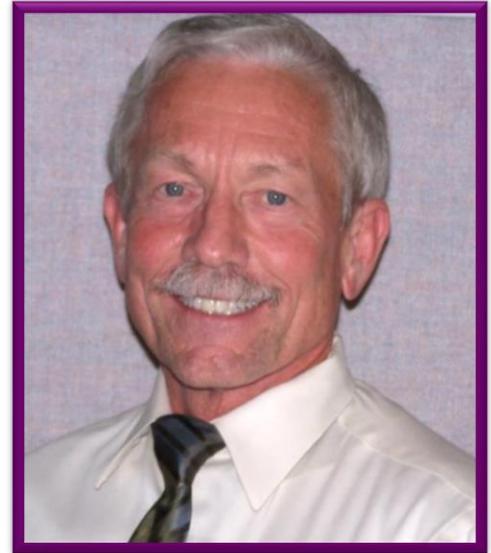


# To *Your* HEALTH *Fresno County*

*Bringing you public health issues and ways to improve personal, family, neighborhood and community health*



## **Obesity in Fresno County: A Call to Action, Part 1**

August 20, 2014

### **We are in the throes of a national epidemic.**

Obesity has more than doubled in children and quadrupled in adolescents over the last 30 years in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

Obesity and overweight account for nearly 1 of every 10 American deaths.<sup>2</sup>

In Fresno County, close to 7 out of every 10 adults are overweight or obese.<sup>3</sup> Over 42% of our students are overweight or obese.<sup>4</sup>

### **Why is obesity such a threat to public health?**

Obesity is associated with many other illnesses and can exacerbate chronic conditions as well as communicable diseases. The health cost of obesity in this country is \$147 billion annually. Persons who are obese spent an average of \$1,429 more for medical care in 2006 than did individuals with normal weight.<sup>5</sup>

**“The health cost of obesity in this country is \$147 billion annually.”**

The rise in childhood obesity is especially alarming. It has both immediate and long term effects on health and well being. Immediate effects include increased likelihood of high blood pressure and high cholesterol, pre-diabetes, bone and joint problems, sleep apnea, and social and psychological problems. The long term health effects include the likelihood of remaining obese as an adult and increased risk for heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, several different types of cancer, and osteoarthritis.<sup>1</sup>

### **Does the public know that obesity is a problem?**

Yes. A 2013 field poll showed that 53% of Central Valley Californians consider unhealthy eating or lack of physical activity to be one of the top health risks facing children.<sup>6</sup>

Given how fast the weight of our nation has changed, how could we not notice? In 1990, less than 15 % of adults were obese in the U.S. In 2010, just 20 years later, 36 states had obesity rates of 25 % or higher, and 12 of those had obesity rates of 30 % or higher.<sup>7</sup>

### **What caused this sharp increase in obesity?**

#### **We move less at work.**

Private sector jobs that require at least moderate physical activity decreased from 50% to 20% from 1960 to 2010 resulting in a daily decrease of 142 calories expended.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Our hobbies have us sitting.**

The average American spends 55% of his/her waking hours sitting down, usually in front of a video display or television. Studies indicate that for each hour of television viewing per day there is a 10% increase in diabetes, a 7.5% increase in heart disease, and a 6.5% higher death rate.<sup>2</sup>

#### **We eat bigger meals, reach for unhealthy snacks, and default to sugary drinks.**

Over the last 30 years, both portion size and eating frequency have increased, adding an average of 28 calories per day to our calorie absorption. "Sugar-sweetened sodas have made the single largest contribution to the calorie glut."<sup>2</sup> In California 62% of adolescents, 41% of children, and 24% of adults drink one or more sodas per day.<sup>8</sup>

#### **What can we do?**

We all know that weight control is far more complicated than simply "calories in" and "calories out." To counter the obesity epidemic, we must consider all of the biological, behavioral, social, and environmental variables.

Obesity is a complex public health issue. All eight pillars of public health must work together to create an environment in which healthy decisions are supported.

I would like to conclude this letter by highlighting a simple tool for individuals and families to help take small, incremental steps toward reduced calorie intake and increased physical activity. Successful weight reduction and control requires BOTH.

#### **Aim for this pattern:**

##### **5-2-1-Almost None**

**5** *or more* fruits and vegetables

**2** hours *or less* of screen time

**1** hour of physical activity for kids (at least 30 minutes for adults)

**Almost none** of sugary drinks such as sodas, sports drinks, and fruit drinks that are not 100% fruit juice.<sup>9</sup>

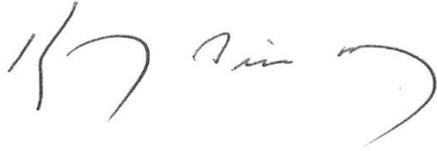
Next week, we will explore how the other public health pillars can positively influence the weight of Fresno County.

I would like to hear from you. Will you join me in living 5-2-1-Almost none?

**“To counter the obesity epidemic, we must consider all variables.”**

Email me at [ToYourHealth@co.fresno.ca.us](mailto:ToYourHealth@co.fresno.ca.us).

Here's to your health!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Bird". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Ken Bird, Fresno County Interim Health Officer

<sup>1</sup> CDC Childhood Obesity Facts <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/obesity/facts.htm>

<sup>2</sup> MSN Healthy Living, Obesity in America: What's Driving the Epidemic?

<http://healthyliving.msn.com/health-wellness/obesity-in-america-whats-driving-the-epidemic-1>

<sup>3</sup> Percent of adults who are overweight or obese: California Health Interview Survey (CHIS), 2011-12

<sup>4</sup> Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health <http://www.kidsdata.org/topic/562/student-obesity-overweight-obese/table>

<sup>5</sup> CDC Press Release: Study Estimates Medical Cost of Obesity May Be As High as \$147 Billion Annually

<http://www.cdc.gov/media/pressrel/2009/r090727.htm>

<sup>6</sup> The California Endowment Press Release: Most Californians See a Direct Link between obesity and sugary sodas

<http://tcenews.calendow.org/releases/most-californians-see-a-direct-linkage-between-obesity-and-sugary-sodas-two-in-three-voters-support-taxing-sugar-sweetened-beverages-if-proceeds-are-tied-to-improving-school-nutrition-and-physical-activity-programs>

<sup>7</sup> CDC Adult Obesity Facts <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/adult.html#History>

<sup>8</sup> Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community, March 5, 2014 Regional News Conferences

<sup>9</sup> Nemours' Formula for a Healthy Lifestyle

<http://www.nemours.org/service/health/growuphealthy/521almostnone.html>