

About September 2010

NATIONAL CHILDHOOD OBESITY AWARENESS MONTH

In the past four decades, obesity rates in the United States have soared among all age groups. This **rise in obesity rates has affected our youth in alarming fashion**. Childhood obesity has increased more than fourfold among those ages 6 to 11. Over 23 million children and teenagers in the United States ages 2 to 19 are obese or overweight, a statistic that health and medical experts consider an epidemic. And this epidemic puts nearly one third of America's children at early risk for Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and even stroke – conditions usually associated with adulthood. Even greater disparities exist among young Hispanics and children of color.

But there are opportunities every day to change these trends. And this September, there is an extraordinary opportunity to build awareness and take action – nationally, as well as in your state, city, workplace and home.

September 2010 is the first-ever Childhood Obesity Awareness Month calling national attention and action to this epidemic. It is your opportunity to unite with leaders in the White House and Congress, with the Governor of your state and Mayor of your city, and with all in your community who care about our youth and the health of our nation today and tomorrow. Here are some highlights:

► *Congress has officially proclaimed September 2010 as National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month. Other national, state, and city leaders are called on to support and observe the month.*

► *Organizations around the United States will plan and carry out activities that build awareness about and encourage action on childhood obesity.*

► *And individuals – we hope you – will take steps within your family, on your block, in your community to help reverse the rise of childhood obesity. Every person in the U.S. can be an important part of Childhood Obesity Awareness Month by taking small steps that add up to a big difference: Eating more balanced meals and snacks, engaging in physical activity more regularly, and sharing your personal plan and commitment with family and friends of all ages.*

This toolkit provides information, Web links and tools to promote and celebrate September as National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month. We wish you much success in helping the U.S. ensure a healthier future for our most important resource: our children.

Fact Sheet – Childhood Obesity Awareness Month

- September 2010 is National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month.
- National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month recognizes the serious threat obesity poses to the health of America's children and decreasing its prevalence in the United States.
- Dedicating at least one month per year to the crisis will help maximize the impact of programs, activities, messaging and campaigns – all aligned to help eradicate childhood obesity.
- U.S. Representatives Marcia L. Fudge (OH-11) and Kay Granger (TX-12) introduced legislation (H. Res. 996), passed on May 20, 2010, to designate September 2010 as National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month. The companion resolution (S. Res 412), introduced by U.S. Senators Kirsten Gillibrand of New York and George Voinovich of Ohio, unanimously passed the Senate in April 2010.
- National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month is supported by more than 75 national organizations. These organizations will help educate the public about the need for increased awareness, proactive steps to prevent childhood obesity in the United States and promotion of healthier lifestyles.
- Parents, health care providers, educators, civic leaders and organizations are encouraged to observe National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month with appropriate programs and activities. The goals of these programs and activities is to prevent childhood obesity, promote healthy eating and physical activity, and increase awareness of childhood obesity among individuals of all ages and walks of life.
- One in three American children is already overweight or obese.
- The financial implications of childhood obesity are sobering, at \$14 billion per year in direct health care costs alone. Supporting awareness and prevention of childhood obesity will help eliminate billions of dollars in unnecessary health care costs and help promote healthier lifestyles that will improve and prolong the lives of the next generation of Americans.
- Protecting the health and wellbeing of American children for years to come is a critical endeavor. Adults must ensure that young people receive a healthy start in life.

What You Can Do to Promote Childhood Obesity Awareness Month

- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. (Link to sample letter.)
- Contact television and radio news stations about a planned program or activity designed to combat childhood obesity. (Link to sample news release.)
- Ask radio stations to air public service announcements. (Link to PSA scripts.)
- Write letters to your local and state elected officials.
- Have your mayor and governor issue proclamations recognizing Childhood Obesity Awareness Month. (Link to proclamation templates.)
- Write about the issues on your blog, Facebook and other social media platforms.
- Have children create their own artwork depicting healthy, active living.
- Encourage your pediatrician's office to promote the issue in their waiting room and patient rooms with handouts, pamphlets, artwork from patients, articles, etc.
- Organize a children's fitness fair.
- Advocate for pocket parks, bike walking trails, safe sidewalks and other amenities that promote healthy physical activity.
- Join or start a coalition/organization aimed at creating healthier food and physical activity environments (i.e. bike paths, access to fresh fruit and veggies, etc) and/or improving school environments (opportunity for more physical activity, nutritious food choices, etc).
- Encourage local restaurants to provide reasonable food and beverage portion sizes and to increase the availability of low-calorie, nutritious food items.
- Take your children to a local farmers market. Have them pick fruits and vegetables in a rainbow of colors.
- Organize a "walking school bus" so children can safely walk to school.
- Organize a community chat on the issues at your local library or online.

- Practice what you preach. Make sure you and your family are eating right and getting regular physical activity. Vary things up and make it fun!
- Organize a neighborhood picnic with healthy, nutritious foods and beverages and planned physical activities and family-friendly sports.
- Organize a nutritious recipes swap event at your local school, church/temple/mosque or in your neighborhood.
- Check out these other great [ideas for individuals and families](http://www.reversechildhoodobesity.org/content/what-individuals-and-families-can-do-0). (Link: <http://www.reversechildhoodobesity.org/content/what-individuals-and-families-can-do-0>)