



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND PEDIATRICIANS DEVELOP
TOOLS TO FIGHT CHILDHOOD OBESITY**

HONOLULU – The Department of Health Healthy Hawai'i Initiative (HHI) and University of Hawai'i (UH) Department of Pediatrics have developed educational obesity prevention materials to help pediatricians talk to families with children during routine health visits. The materials consist of handouts for families that outline healthy eating habits proven to have an effect on weight and will be piloted at the Kapi'olani Medical Center for Women and Children's Pediatric Clinic. Physicians have been trained in the use of the curriculum.

A DOH study conducted in 2003 found that almost one-third of the children entering Hawai'i public schools are either overweight or at risk of becoming overweight. As they grow older, overweight children and adolescents are at increased risk for numerous health conditions, including type 2 diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, as well as shorter life expectancies.

An extensive literature review was conducted by Dr. Gina French, Kapi'olani Pediatric Clinic medical director, to identify key behaviors of healthy families that have shown to be effective for attaining a healthy weight. The project is based on the latest research available and presents user friendly information to families during periodic well child visits. Doctors trained in using the materials share the information with the child's parent or caregiver during the well child visit, and provide a handout for them to take.

"The doctor's recommendations consist of age related tips from infancy on and include topics such as breastfeeding, limiting sweet drinks, eating meals together as a family at home and turning off the

television during meals,” said Dr. Louise Iwaishi, principal investigator for the Pediatric Obesity Prevention Project. “These tips are supportive of healthy eating habits and encourage quality time with the family.”

Research has shown that parents are often their children’s most important role model. If children see their caregivers enjoying healthy foods and being physically active, they are more likely to do the same. Therefore, the recommendations are aimed at having the whole family develop habits that help prevent overweight. In addition, age appropriate nutrition advice is provided for children ages zero to five.

“The obesity prevention project is an example of trusted people in our community sharing with local families actions they can take to live healthier lives,” stated Health Director Chiyoame Fukino, M.D. “Through this partnership we are working on a system change and encourage healthcare centers and physicians to use the materials created.”

The next phase of the project will include creating translated versions of the handouts and posters in Marshallese and Chuukese. In addition, HHI and UH are working on making the curriculum into a permanent course offering at the UH-Manoa John A. Burns School of Medicine.

The Pediatric Obesity Prevention Project is a part of the HHI’s social-ecological approach that reduces the burden of chronic disease in Hawai’i by encouraging physical activity, healthy eating and living tobacco free on multiple levels. Recent HHI activities include public education campaigns encouraging walking and eating one more fruit and vegetable every day; working with the Department of Education to develop and track the implementation of Wellness Guidelines; and engaging land developers, planners and community members to advocate for communities that encourage walking and biking and provide access to nutritious foods. For more information on HHI and to download free copies of the handouts visit www.healthyhawaii.com, and click on the Training section.

Doctor’s Healthy Eating Tips for the Family:

- Turn off the TV when you eat
- Eat together in one place in your home
- Plan and eat 3 meals and 2 healthy snacks a day
- Eat fruits and vegetables with meals and snacks
- Drink 2 - 3 cups of skim or 1% milk per day
- Avoid fast food and soda
- Drink plenty of water
- Plan meals to help avoid skipping a meal or eating fast food

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Attachment: Childhood Obesity Fact Sheet

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Childhood Obesity Fact Sheet

- A recent study showed that over a quarter of all incoming kindergarteners were overweight and obese. Obesity and overweight rates were higher in rural school complexes than urban ones. (Source: Percentage of Kindergarten Students in Hawaii Ages 4-6 Years Old Entering Public Schools by Weight, Pobutsky et. al., 2002-2003)
- According to the results of the 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), 14.3% of Hawaii's high school students are overweight and 15.6% are obese. 34.3% are meeting the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity five or more days a week. Only 17.2% reported eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day.
- Nationwide more than 12.5 million children and adolescents -- 17.1 percent of people ages 2 to 19 years -- are overweight.
- Physicians are important partners to addressing this growing problem and can implement practices to combat overweight among their pediatric patients and families.
- As they grow older, overweight children and adolescents are at increased risk for numerous health conditions, including type 2 diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, high triglyceride levels, some specific cancers, gallstones, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, premature death, sleep apnea and respiratory problems, as well as poorer physical functioning status, and shorter life expectancy.
- It is estimated that this may be the first generation that will not outlive their parents because of physical inactivity and unhealthy eating choices. (Source: New England Journal of Medicine, J Olshansky)
- Teaching kids the importance of eating well and being physically active at a young age is crucial to reversing the trend of overweight in this country.

Did You Know?

- Overweight adolescents have a 70 percent chance of becoming overweight or obese adults.
- The number of overweight children in the U.S. has more than tripled over the past three decades.
- Studies show that nearly 34 percent of children and teens in America are either overweight or at risk of becoming overweight.
- Research has shown that parents are often their children's most important role model. If children see their caregivers enjoying healthy foods and being physically active, they are more likely to do the same.