

Obesity threatens every American. A stunning statistic based on data collected through the National Health and Nutrition Examination Study between the 1970s and 2004 projected that if current trends continue, by the year 2030, 86.3% of US adults could be classified as overweight and 51.1% as obese. The highest levels of obesity could occur in non-Hispanic black women (96.9%) and Mexican-American men (91.1%). Following this trend, by the year 2048, every American adult would be considered overweight or obese.

SOURCE: Obesity, advance online (July 24, 2008) <http://www.nature.com/oby/journal/vaop/ncurrent/abs/oby2008351a.html>

Skagit County Children’s Health Initiative

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

Obesity and inactivity contribute to a host of chronic diseases and cause a greater likelihood of premature death. In Washington and the nation, obesity is epidemic. The epidemic is driven by changes in physical, social and economic environments that make it easy to take in more calories than needed while making it harder to get enough physical activity to consume those extra calories. Many barriers make it difficult for people to change their eating and physical activity habits. Prevention is the greatest hope to slow and reverse obesity. To be successful in reducing obesity and increasing physical activity, government, communities and individuals need to work together to create policies and environments that support healthy diets and opportunities for physical activity.

National and Washington data and trend information:

- The percentage of young people who are overweight has tripled since 1980. Among children and adolescents aged 6-19, 16%-more than 9 million are considered overweight.
- Children who are overweight are more likely to become adults who are obese.
- Latest data estimate childhood obesity will be 20% by 2010.
- Less than 25% of young people eat the recommended five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day.
- Decreased opportunities for physical activity at school, after school, and in the community contribute to children not meeting recommended levels of moderate and vigorous physical activity.
- Lack of regular physical activity is linked to increased risk of many chronic diseases.
- Some experts believe that if childhood obesity and inactivity rates in the U.S. continue to rise, the current generation of children could become the first in history to live shorter lives than their parents.

Skagit County Data: Washington State Healthy Youth Survey, 2006:

- Percentage of students in our county that are overweight or risk of overweight as reported in the:

	Skagit County	Washington State
Eighth grade	32%	25%
Tenth grade	27%	25%
Twelfth grade	27%	25%

- Percentage of students in our county who ate fruits and vegetables 5 or more times a day:

	30%	25%
Eighth grade	30%	30%
Tenth grade	29%	25%
Twelfth grade	20%	22%

- An average of 20% of Skagit County students in the eighth, tenth and twelfth grades do not meet the recommendations for vigorous or moderate physical activity.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Since the early 1990s, with the formation of the Skagit County Physical Activity Coalition, the 2003-2008 Mount Vernon Healthy Communities Project, the formation of the Active Communities Task Force, and now the new three-year Healthy Communities Preventive Block Grant-funded Skagit County Healthy Communities Project (SCHCP), Skagit Valley Hospital in partnership with the Skagit County Health Department has a long history of facilitating and building capacity for community-based health initiatives.

NEED

The issues of inactivity and obesity are complex. A child's ability to make healthy choices is influenced by the societal components and environments in which they live, including families, peers, schools and communities. Current best practice is rooted in communities-based efforts to influence policies and environments that enable the individual to make healthier choices. Currently there are a few small school-based efforts in Skagit County addressing children's health, but nothing coordinated exists. A countywide initiative that would engage key stakeholders, examine current practices, recommend priority changes, develop implementation strategies and identify resources that would provide a coordinated and comprehensive approach to ensuring a community environment that supports a healthy lifestyle for the children and families of Skagit County is needed.

PURPOSE OF EFFORTS

The purpose of this undertaking is for Skagit Valley Hospital, Skagit County Health Department and the Skagit County Healthy Communities Project to undertake a facilitated broad-based effort to determine opportunities for community partnerships to work together to influence the health of children in Skagit County, especially around obesity and physical inactivity issues.

PLAN FOR ACTION

Capitalizing on our experience of coalition and capacity building around community-based health initiatives we propose to:

- Engage healthcare providers, school districts and community youth serving agencies in stakeholder section meetings to determine their interest, needs and roles for involvement in the initiative.
- Determine areas within the issue where further assessment is needed.
- Convene initiative members for the purpose of creating a strategic action plan.
- Identify community and financial resources needed to meet project objectives.
- Develop strategies to implement and evaluate the project action plan.



SKAGIT
VALLEY
HOSPITAL



Skagit County Healthy Communities Project, Liz McNett Crowl Coordinator
Skagit Valley Hospital PO Box 1376 Mount Vernon, WA 98273
360.428.2331 LCrowl@skagitvalleyhospital.org