

CHAPTER 9

BECOME AN ADVOCATE

Obesity is a major health public problem that is just now getting the attention it deserves. But there's still a lot that still needs to be done. Here are some of the things you can do to help combat the obesity epidemic:

- **As an individual....**
 - Eat a variety of healthy foods including 5 to 9 servings of fruits and vegetables every day.
 - Choose to walk or bike rather than drive to get to and from school or work.
 - Make healthy choices when eating out; ask your favorite restaurants to include healthy menu offerings.
 - Encourage your friends and family members to join you in adopting a healthy lifestyle.
- **As a parent...**
 - Act as a role model by eating healthfully and getting regular physical activity.
 - Work with your child's school to encourage healthy lunchroom options and daily PE classes.
 - Have fruits and vegetables on hand for meals and snacks.
 - Set limits on TV-viewing.
 - Avoid buying and serving



sugar-sweetened beverages.

- o Help your child find safe routes to walk or bike to school.
- o Talk to teachers about the problem of obesity and urge them to get involved in the well-being of their students. Many teachers sell candy or soda in class to support club activities. Ask them to help find healthier alternatives.
- o See how Oregon schools are coping with this problem, by visiting the Oregon School Board Association's web page on "Fighting Childhood Obesity" at

www.osba.org/hotopics/atrisk/obesity/

- **As an employer...**

- o Provide exercise facilities and changing rooms.
- o Include affordable, healthy food choices in the vending machines and cafeteria.
- o Encourage physical activity by supporting employee walking programs and sponsoring community events such as charity runs and walk-a-thons.
- o Make stairways safe and inviting and post signs by the elevators encouraging stair use.

- **As a voter...**

"Many people believe that overweight and obesity is a personal responsibility. To some degree they are right, but it is also a community responsibility. When there are no safe, accessible places for children to play or adults to walk, jog, or ride a bike, that is a community responsibility. When school lunchrooms and office cafeterias do not provide healthy and appealing food choices, that is a community responsibility. When new or expectant mothers are not educated about the benefits of breastfeeding, that is a community responsibility. When we do not require daily physical education in our schools, that is also a community responsibility. There is much that we can and should do together."

David Satcher, The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity, 2001.

- Become informed about local and national legislation that could impact health policy concerning obesity, nutrition, and fitness.
- Let your community leaders and elected officials know that you support healthy active communities.
- Support community planning initiatives that emphasize walking and biking in their design.
- **As a community member...**
 - Take part in neighborhood transportation and planning meetings to advocate for accessible walking and biking routes.
 - Support funding for sidewalks, bike paths, parks, recreation centers, and swimming pools.
 - Gather neighborhood signatures for changes such as crosswalks, bike lanes, and curb ramps.
 - Ask the public works department to trim trees or plants that interfere with safe walking along the sidewalk.
 - Organize “walking bus” programs to provide a safe way for neighborhood children to walk to school.
- **As a community leader...**
 - Promote urban designs that include bike lanes and safe street crossings to encourage walking and bicycling.
 - Take into account the health impact as well as financial considerations when making policy decisions.
 - Advocate for schools to offer daily PE classes and healthy food choices.



- o Support funding of health initiatives to increase physical activity and promote healthy eating.
- o Back zoning measures that provide allow full-service grocery stores and farmers' markets in all neighborhoods.