

About the Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity

CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity (DNPAO) invests in efforts to support healthy eating, active living, and healthy weight for all people. These investments advance public health strategies that prevent chronic diseases related to diet and inactivity to protect the health of people across the nation.



Poor nutrition and inadequate physical activity are significant risk factors for obesity and other chronic diseases, such as type 2 diabetes and heart disease. They can also contribute to stroke, certain cancers, and depression. In the United States:

- Less than 1 in 10 children and adults eat the [recommended daily amount of vegetables](#).
- Only 1 in 4 adults and 1 in 6 young people fully meet [physical activity guidelines](#).
- 2 in 10 children and 4 in 10 adults have obesity.

DNPAO focuses on supporting breastfeeding, promoting a healthy childhood, improving nutrition, increasing physical activity, preventing and reducing obesity, and achieving health equity by reducing disparities. DNPAO experts add to scientific evidence that guides public health practices and make timely, relevant data available to monitor public health outcomes and progress.

Breastfeeding is the best first source of nutrition for most infants, and it can reduce the risk of some health conditions for both infants and mothers. Although more than 80% of mothers start out breastfeeding, about 60% stop sooner than they planned.

Low rates of breastfeeding add more than \$3 billion a year to medical costs for women and children in the United States.

DNPAO promotes breastfeeding and infant and toddler nutrition practices by:

- Empowering mothers who want to breastfeed get the support they need while in the hospital and once they return home. DNPAO helps hospitals improve maternity care practices that support breastfeeding.
- Measuring progress on hospital support for breastfeeding by conducting the national [Maternity Practices in Infant Nutrition and Care \(mPINC\) survey](#).
- Improving [continuity of care](#) throughout communities with low breastfeeding rates. DNPAO promotes consistent, collaborative, and seamless delivery of high-quality services from the prenatal period until families are no longer

breastfeeding.

- Sharing [resources](#) to provide parents and caregivers with information about infant formula feeding and introducing healthy foods and beverages to support good nutrition.

Good nutrition and physical activity are vital for healthy growth and development. In contrast, poor nutrition and low levels of physical activity contribute to childhood obesity. Many settings influence a child's diet and physical activity, including their home, childcare centers, schools, communities, and clinics.

DNPAO investments help to improve nutrition and physical activity for children by:

- Promoting best practices in nutrition, breastfeeding, screen time, and physical activity in [early care and education \(ECE\)](#) settings by helping states improve policies and programs to meet obesity prevention standards in ECEs.
- Helping communities create safe places for children to walk and play.
- Working with health care and community partners to increase availability of and access to [family healthy weight programs](#).

People with healthy eating patterns live longer and have healthier lives. However, many groups have limited access to affordable, healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables. These groups include people living in rural areas, tribal communities, and neighborhoods where most residents have lower incomes. People with disabilities may also be affected. In addition, people in some racial and ethnic groups may not have access to culturally preferred healthy foods.

DNPAO expertise and funding help states, communities, and national partners to increase healthy food and beverage options by:

- Working with partners to use [food service or nutrition guidelines](#) and tools to increase access to nutritious food options in community settings, such as hospitals and food pantries.
- Supporting expansion of existing fruit and vegetable [voucher incentive and produce prescription programs](#) to improve affordability and access to healthier food.
- Using data to track nutrition behaviors among U.S. children and adults.

Physical activity can help protect health and prevent or improve many health conditions, including many of the leading causes of death in the United States. Other potential benefits include better school performance, improved mental health, healthier aging, and improved military readiness. Inadequate physical activity costs the nation \$117 billion a year for related health care.

Unfortunately, many Americans live in communities that lack safe, convenient places to be physically active. In response, DNPAO launched [Active People, Healthy Nation](#)SM to help 27 million Americans become more physically active by 2027. Through this initiative, DNPAO:

- Partners with state and local governments to promote equitable improvements in [community design](#) that make physical activity and active transportation safer and more convenient for everyone.
- Educates the public about the health benefits of physical activity and tracks how much physical activity young people and adults are getting.

The [State Physical Activity and Nutrition Program \(SPAN\)](#) funds 17 states to use interventions that support good nutrition, safe and accessible physical activity, healthy ECE environments, and breastfeeding. SPAN recipients work to reduce or eliminate health disparities related to poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and obesity.

The [High Obesity Program \(HOP\)](#) funds 16 universities to work with community extension services to increase access to nutritious foods, safe and accessible physical activity, family healthy weight programs, and healthy ECE environments in counties where more than 40% of the adult population has obesity.

[Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health \(REACH\)](#) is at the forefront of CDC's efforts to achieve health for everyone across the United States, with a special focus on populations that experience health disparities. REACH funds 50 state and local organizations to reduce health disparities among racial and ethnic groups. Recipients work in communities with high risk or rates of chronic diseases, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and obesity. Recipients use culturally tailored interventions to increase access to:

- Nutritious foods
- Safe and accessible physical activity
- Breastfeeding information, knowledge, and support
- Healthy ECE environments
- Family healthy weight programs

- Tobacco-free environments
- Routine adult vaccinations

From 2018 to 2023, SPAN, REACH, and HOP program recipients potentially benefited:

- More than 28 million people through increased access to places where they can be physically active.
- More than 9 million people through increased access to nutritious foods.
- More than 3.8 million children through improved ECE environments.
- More than 3 million people through community support to start and continue breastfeeding.



[Director's Bio](#)

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