

TAKING ACTION FOR A HEALTHIER CALIFORNIA: *Recommendations to Improve Healthy Food and Activity Options*

Squeezed by time and money, Californians have succumbed to a lifestyle marked by physical inactivity and filled with high-fat, high-sugar foods that are more available, affordable, and convenient than healthier options. Poor nutrition and inactivity are dooming Californians to serious health problems—including diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and cancer—now and in the future. They are leading to excessive health care costs and a disabled and less productive work force. While everyone is impacted by these health concerns, limited access to healthy eating and regular activity options affects a disproportionate number of communities of color and low-income neighborhoods. The mounting costs and consequences of this public health crisis are needlessly borne by government, employers, the overwhelmed health care system, families, and individuals. This crisis is preventable, and much can be done to ensure a healthier future for our neighbors and children.

Factors that influence eating and activity are shaped by the decisions of businesses and government—decisions that are beyond the control of individual parents or families.

Increasingly, government and businesses are recognizing their role and committing their institutions to be engaged in finding solutions to the epidemic. However, thwarting this crisis requires a major shift in approach for California's public and private sectors. The Strategic Alliance—a statewide coalition organized to bring urgent attention to the obesity epidemic, poor nutrition, and physical inactivity—is highlighting the roles of government and industry in crafting comprehensive solutions.

We applaud Governor Schwarzenegger's commitment to the prevention of nutrition and physical activity related disease and to expanding the circle of influence and responsibility of leaders committed to solving this community challenge. We urge business, government, and community groups to endorse and adopt our recommendations in addressing this community challenge. The checklist at right highlights priorities. The following pages present a more complete list of recommendations. We encourage corporate and government leaders to use their resources to draw attention to this crisis and assure that chronic disease prevention research and programs are adequately funded. By working together, we know we can reshape the way California eats, moves, and stays healthy.

Priority Checklist for Action by Business and Government

- Eliminate the advertising of unhealthy foods and beverages to children and youth.
- Establish grocery stores with produce and other fresh, healthy items in all low-income neighborhoods and communities of color.
- Adopt model worksite policies that include access to healthy food and physical activity and to breastfeeding accommodations.
- Provide health plan benefits that cover prevention and wellness activities, including counseling, education, and access to weight-loss and physical activity programs.
- Support new mothers in breastfeeding and eliminate in-hospital marketing of artificial baby milk (formula) to new mothers.
- Ensure full and equitable access to parks, open spaces, and public facilities (community centers, schools, government buildings) that could house programs and services that increase the amount of physical activity for each community member.
- Adopt and implement "complete streets" policies and build trails to increase safety and convenience for people who walk, bicycle, or use wheelchairs.
- Ensure that children are receiving quality physical education that meets minimum state standards for duration and frequency.
- Institute healthy food and beverage standards for all food items available in preschool, school, and after-school programs.
- Implement farm-to-institution programs to make fresh, local, and sustainably grown food available at schools, hospitals, worksites, and other facilities.

FOOD AND BEVERAGE INDUSTRY

We call on leaders in the food and beverage industry to commit to the following actions:

Food Manufacturers and Retailers

- Eliminate all advertising and promotion of unhealthy foods and beverages to children and youth by discontinuing the following marketing strategies:
 - ▼ Promoting unhealthy foods and beverages via broadcast, print and electronic media, and toys
 - ▼ Using sports or entertainment celebrities, including cartoon characters, in product tie-ins that advertise unhealthy foods and beverages to children
 - ▼ Advertising indirectly through fundraising programs, incentive programs using contests or coupons, and the like at institutions serving children and youth (including schools, preschools, after-school programs, and recreation facilities)

Food Processors and Restaurants

- Ensure that packaged single-serving snacks, beverages, and meals contain no more than one standard portion size per package.
- Use only healthy foods in children-focused meals (such as Happy Meals) by limiting fat and sugar and adding fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Post calorie information per serving on all menus and menu boards at fast food and chain restaurants.

Retail Grocers

- Establish grocery stores with produce and other fresh, healthy items in all neighborhoods and ensure access to these stores in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color.
- Guarantee equal quality, variety, and price of produce and other fresh foods in all neighborhoods.
- Make prices for healthy purchased and prepared foods comparable to those for unhealthy products (e.g., price baked chips at no more than regular chips, low-sodium soups at no more than regular soups).
- Ensure access to grocery stores for seniors, the disabled, and low-income people with limited transportation options.
- Provide grocery store aisles containing only healthy food options and establish “junk-food-free” checkout lanes.

EMPLOYERS

We call on all employers, small and large, to commit to the following actions for full- and part-time employees:

- Adopt standards for the provision of healthy food at all meetings and events.
- Provide incentives to employees who walk, bike, or use public transportation to commute to and from work and for work-related travel.
- Encourage physical activity through such practices as encouraging stairway use, providing bike racks, providing lockers and showers, and offering flex time or breaks for physical activity.
- Ensure that a significant percentage of prepared and vending machine foods sold at worksites are healthy and affordable.
- Maximize the use of local, regional, and sustainably produced foods in food-service operations.
- Post and enforce organizational policies that support breastfeeding on site, as mandated by state law.

ENTERTAINMENT AND PROFESSIONAL SPORTS

We call on leaders in entertainment and professional sports to commit to the following actions:

- Ensure that healthy foods and beverages are equally accessible and affordable in sports, movie, and other entertainment venues.
- Allocate a percentage of sports arena proceeds to support development of public physical activity facilities and programs in surrounding communities.
- Ensure depictions of physically active people that include all ages, ethnicities, genders, body types, and abilities in television, film, and advertisements.
- Eliminate product placement for unhealthy food and beverages in movies and TV programs targeted to children and youth.
- Expand the participation of professional athletes and administrators in promoting physical activity by providing facilities, equipment, and personnel for community use.

HEALTH CARE INSURERS AND PROVIDERS

Prevention is the first step in responding to the obesity epidemic, while bariatric surgery and pharmaceuticals are interventions of last resort, particularly for children. We call on health insurance and health care leaders to commit to the following actions:

- Provide health plan benefits for prevention and wellness activities, including counseling, education, and access to weight-loss, weight-maintenance, and physical activity programs.
- Support new mothers in breastfeeding and eliminate in-hospital marketing of artificial baby milk (formula) to new mothers.
- Adopt and implement for all patients preventive standards of care that promote regular physical activity and healthy eating in a culturally competent manner.
- Provide continuing education credits for health practitioners participating in training in nutrition, physical activity and breastfeeding education.
- Phase out fast-food restaurants in health care facilities.
- Maximize the use of fresh, regional, and sustainably produced foods through institution of farm-to-hospital programs.
- Adopt employer guidelines for healthy worksite facilities, including implementing the Lactation Accommodation Law for their employees.

GOVERNMENT (STATE AND LOCAL)

Government agencies are the natural locus of leadership in promoting comprehensive and effective approaches to improving the nutrition and physical activity of community members. We call on government leaders at the state and local levels to collaborate with all sectors and commit to the following actions:

Prioritize Prevention

- Ensure full and equitable access to all public facilities (community centers, schools, government buildings) that could house programs and services that increase the amount of daily physical activity for each community member.
- Make prevention a top priority in state and local health departments, with dedicated leadership, staffing, and resources.
- Promulgate, adopt, and disseminate model worksite policies that provide access to options for healthy eating and physical activity.
- Assure that food assistance programs provide healthy foods (*e.g.*, demonstrate the feasibility of adopting a policy to include fruits and vegetables in the California WIC food package through a pilot project).

Incentives and Funding

- Provide tax and other incentives for businesses to offer physical activity, healthy food options, and lactation accommodations to employees.
- Provide tax and other incentives for the development of physical activity facilities, improved walkability, grocery stores, farmers markets, and other retail outlets for healthy foods, particularly in low-income communities.
- Develop a permanent state fund to provide matching dollars for the maintenance, rehabilitation, and development of parks and recreation facilities in all neighborhoods.

Planning, Land Use, and Transportation

- Adopt and implement “complete streets” policies and build trails to provide safe and convenient travel options for people who walk, bicycle, or use wheelchairs.
- Utilize planning and zoning processes to promote appropriate design and land uses that support access to healthy foods and encourage walking and bicycling in all neighborhoods.
- Ensure that public recreational facilities, supermarkets, and farmers markets are served by public transit routes.
- Require that each general plan contain a recreation element that includes access to, and availability of, facilities and park land to encourage physical activity.

SCHOOLS

We call on departments of education, school board members, and school administrators to commit to the following actions:

- Ensure that children receive quality physical education that meets minimum state standards for duration and frequency.
- Make school recreational facilities available for after-hours use by the community, especially in neighborhoods that lack park and recreational facilities.
- Institute healthy food and beverage standards for all meals, snacks, and beverages available in preschool, school, and after-school programs.
- Eliminate advertising of unhealthy food and beverage products on school grounds and the use of unhealthy foods in fundraising, incentive, and other such programs.
- Maximize the availability of fresh, regional, and sustainably produced foods through initiatives such as farm-to-school programs.
- Provide a nutritious breakfast utilizing the federal School Breakfast program in all schools.

For more information about these recommendations or the Strategic Alliance for Healthy Food and Activity Environments, contact Leslie Mikkelsen at 510-444-7738, or see our website at www.eatbettermovemore.org

The Alliance Steering Committee: The California Adolescent Nutrition and Fitness Program (CANFit); California Center for Public Health Advocacy; California Food Policy Advocates; California Pan Ethnic Health Network; California Park & Recreation Society; California Project LEAN; California WIC Association; Child Care Food Program Roundtable; Latino Health Access; Prevention Institute; Samuels & Associates, Inc; YMCA of the East Bay