



# Reducing Childhood Obesity

Obesity impedes a child's ability to learn and grow. It is no secret that overweight or obese children and adolescents are at risk for many health problems. Some of the negative health outcomes that may be more obvious to children and their parents are asthma, sleep apnea, skin infections, and joint pain. There are other serious health risks associated with obesity that may be less obvious to the child or parent, such as high blood pressure (hypertension) and Type 2 Diabetes. These conditions can have serious long-term health effects and may require ongoing medical treatment and management.

Over the past two decades, the prevalence of children who are obese has doubled, while the number of adolescents who are obese has tripled. According to the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) 31.9% of children and adolescents were overweight (BMI at or above the 85th percentile) and 16.3% were obese (BMI at or above 95th percentile).

**The MN-AAP supports efforts to promote physical activity in school and healthy food and beverage choices to prevent childhood obesity.** Minnesota pediatricians participated on the 2009 Legislative Childhood Obesity Working Group and support passage of H.F.3115/S.F.2753. The bill:

- Establishes statewide standards for quality physical education;
- Helps parents be informed of school health and wellness policies by requiring they be posted on school district web sites;
- Requires the development of quality recess guidelines by the Department of Education and asks the Department to track the amount of PE offered; and
- Creates a Healthy Kids Awards program to encourage integration of physical activity into nonphysical education classes, recess, and other activities throughout the day to help children get the recommended 60 minutes per day of physical activity each day.

**The MN-AAP supports sustainable funding for the State Health Improvement Program (SHIP).** As a public-private partnership, SHIP helps to fund a variety of efforts in local communities aimed at reducing obesity and tobacco use. Implemented in 2008 and funded through the Health Care Access Fund, the program is just beginning to have an impact but the Governor proposes cutting funding by 20 percent. Collaboration between health care providers, schools, communities and families can make lasting changes that encourage physical activity and help children grow. To make a long-term impact on public health we must invest now.

**MN-AAP supports efforts to increase daily exercise and building community environments that support regular physical activity.** To that end, we support H.F.2801/S.F.2461 encouraging community infrastructure that implements Complete Streets design. Complete Streets are designed and operated so they work for all users—pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Communities that adopt complete streets policies ask transportation planners and engineers to consistently design and alter the right-of-way with all users in mind. When streets are safe for walking and biking, more people can choose to incorporate physical activity into their lives.