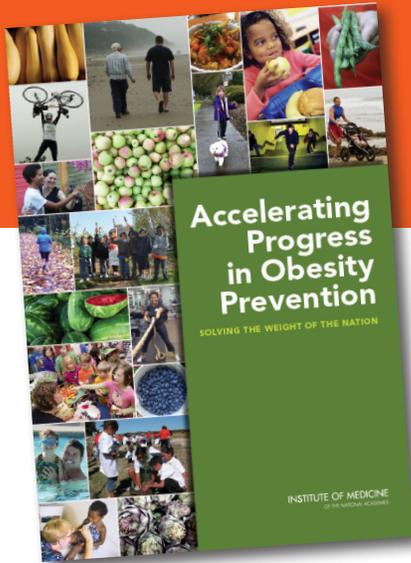


Accelerating Progress in Obesity Prevention

SOLVING THE WEIGHT OF THE NATION

AN EXPERT REPORT FROM THE INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE



The Challenges We Face: More than one-third of adults and close to one-fifth of children and adolescents in the United States are obese. Obesity's effects on health and health care costs could become catastrophic. While many communities are taking important steps to reduce the epidemic, accelerating progress is critical. Success requires action from all of us in the places where we live, work, learn, and play. Progress in one area will reinforce progress in others.

Activating Health Care Providers

Health care providers and insurers are part of a system of support and service that can give individuals and families access to obesity prevention and treatment. The full potential of this system to detect obesity, counsel patients, support healthy behaviors, and encourage changes in the community remains untapped.

Why should we strive to bring this vision to life?

Support from health care providers and insurers helps people make healthy lifestyle choices and can reduce obesity-related medical costs.

TODAY'S REALITY	TOMORROW'S VISION
Few health care providers report using BMI (Body Mass Index), a widely recommended tool for assessing overweight and obesity.	Health care providers have standards of practice for prevention, screening, diagnosis, and treatment of overweight and obesity, including routine measurement of BMI.
Many health care providers feel uncomfortable discussing weight with patients.	Health care providers are trained in and offer weight management counseling.
Many health insurers do not pay for obesity prevention and treatment services unless there are associated problems such as type 2 diabetes or high blood pressure.	Obesity prevention services are considered a core benefit, and insurance plans include incentives for healthy weight maintenance.
Many women gain too much weight during pregnancy.	Women's pregnancy weight gain is within recommended ranges.
Less than half of women breastfeed for 6 months.	Medical facilities, services, and clinics have policies consistent with the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative, which supports and promotes breastfeeding.

See the other solutions in this series:

- Schools
- Food and Drink
- Physical Activity
- Marketing
- Workplaces

www.iom.edu/acceleratingobesityprevention

How could this vision come to life in your community?

HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

- Adopt standards of practice for prevention, screening, diagnosis, and treatment of overweight and obesity.
- Provide pre-pregnancy counseling about achieving and maintaining a healthy weight before and during pregnancy.
- Advocate for physical activity opportunities and accessible healthy foods and beverages in patients' communities.

HEALTH CARE ENVIRONMENTS

- Meaningful use of electronic health records could make BMI screening and tracking easier.
- Incorporate healthy eating and active living into office practices and programs.
- Adopt breastfeeding policies consistent with the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative.

HEALTH INSURERS

(including self-insured organizations and employers)

- Ensure coverage of, access to, and incentives for routine obesity prevention, screening, diagnosis, and treatment.
- Include incentives in health plans, such as reduced premiums or deductibles for maintaining healthy lifestyles.
- Take advantage of the obesity-related provisions in the health care reform law.

HEALTH PROFESSIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMS

- Include instruction in prevention, screening, diagnosis, and treatment of overweight and obesity.

EMPLOYERS

- Institute policies that support breastfeeding.

Why should we strive to bring this vision to life?

Evidence shows that...

- Estimated annual medical costs of obesity are \$190.2 billion, nearly 21 percent of national health care spending.
- Incentives for maintaining a healthy lifestyle are cost-effective when one accounts for the high costs associated with obesity over the long term.
- Participants are more likely to lose weight and adopt health-promoting behaviors when insurers provide incentives.
- Pre-pregnancy counseling helps women learn what they can do to have a healthy pregnancy and reduce their child's risk of obesity.
- Breastfeeding is associated with a reduced risk of childhood obesity.

INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE

OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES

Advising the nation • Improving health

500 Fifth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

TEL 202.334.2352

FAX 202.334.1412

www.iom.edu

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