

More Can Be Done to Combat Childhood Obesity

August 22 2008

School officials and parents concerned about childhood obesity should look to national guidelines that recommend 60 minutes of exercise per day, according to public health officials. A new report issued this week showed that adult obesity rates rose in 37 states, and all states except Colorado now report obesity rates higher than 20 percent.

Oregon State University researcher Stewart Trost is an internationally-recognized expert on physical activity and childhood obesity. His recently published policy brief on Physical Activity and Academic Achievement is cited a number of times in the recent report, “F as in Fat: How Obesity Policies Are Failing in America,” a 2008 report from the Trust for America’s Health (TFAH) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF).

Trost, an associate professor in OSU’s Department of Nutrition and Exercise Sciences, said the problem of obesity starts early, which is why he is planning a project to work with Extension offices throughout Oregon on research and training interventions with home daycare providers. Trost will work on the intervention along with other researchers who are part of the Obesity Prevention Core in the new Hallie Ford Center for Healthy Children and Families at OSU.

Trost’s previous research showed an alarming lack of physical activity and poor nutrition at many home-based childcare providers. Thus the patterns of lack of exercise and poor food choices are starting early for some youngsters, Trost said.

“We found that 25 percent of these daycare providers had the TV on most or all of the day, less than 20 percent had a place inside designated for play or physical activity and most of the children were getting maybe 16 minutes of activity per day,” he said of the study, which was done with children ages 2 to 4.

In addition, Trost said once children enter school, they are not getting enough exercise in school or outside of it.

“We should be advocating that all schools and all grade levels offer daily physical education, particularly in elementary and middle school,” said Trost, citing numbers that show that only 3.8 percent of elementary schools provide daily physical education.

Trost said in a “No Child Left Behind” environment, it is often difficult for educators to funnel resources toward physical education when emphasis is put on test scores. However, he said it is not only the obesity crisis that should concern parents and educators.

“There is a strong link between healthy kids and academic performance,” Trost said. “If you are not healthy, it makes it hard to do well academically.”

In Oregon, state legislators have made strides to try and combat the problem. Gov. Ted Kulongoski signed a bill requiring 150 minutes of physical education a week for grades kindergarten through 5 and 225 minutes a week for grades 6 through 8. The law doesn’t go into effect until 2017.

Considering that Oregon’s obesity rate has gone up for the third year in a row, Trost said more must be done.

“The new law is a good start,” he said. “Ideally, every student should be

getting 30 minutes of exercise during the school day, and another 30 minutes at home per day.”

Source: Oregon State University

Citation: More Can Be Done to Combat Childhood Obesity (2008, August 22) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2008-08-combat-childhood-obesity.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.