

The Facts: Nutrition Issues Affecting Oregon Youth

The paradox of escalating obesity and chronic hunger in Oregon offers compelling evidence that nutritional needs of large segments of the Oregon population remain unmet.

(1) Diet is a known risk factor for the three leading causes of death – heart disease, cancer and stroke – as well as for diabetes, high blood pressure, and osteoporosis. Eating habits that contribute to health problems tend to be established early in life; young persons having unhealthy eating habits tend to maintain these habits as they age. (2)

Over 25% of 8th graders and 20% of 11th graders in Oregon are either overweight or at risk of becoming overweight.

- An increasing body mass index (BMI) for age correlates with clinical risk factors for cardiovascular disease including hyperlipidemia, elevated insulin and blood pressure which tracks into adulthood. (1)

Oregon ranks first in hunger in the United States. 12.6% of Oregon households were food insecure and 5.8% of households were hungry. One out of 8 Oregonians received an emergency food box.

- Hunger and food insecurity keep children's bodies and brains from developing normally, which can result in permanent damage, poor academic performance, compromised health at any age, and increased healthcare costs. (3)

75% of Oregon students don't eat the recommended number of servings of fruits and vegetables each day.

- Fruits and vegetables are an excellent source of antioxidants as well as vitamins and minerals. They can exert a strong protective effect from cancer and can control hypertension without the use of medication. Evidence indicates that low intakes are associated with other chronic diseases. (1)

In Oregon, over 50% of 11th graders and 40% of 8th graders eat breakfast less than five days per week.

- Dietary quality often decreases from childhood through adolescence. Skipping meals is a contributing factor. Learning improves and discipline problems are reduced among students who eat breakfast at school. (1)

One fifth of Oregon high school students consumed 3 or more glasses of milk per day.

- Low calcium intake during the teen years limits the development of peak bone mass, resulting in increased risk for bone fractures later in life. Adolescent girls in particular are at risk for not achieving peak bone mass. There is a strong association between soda consumption and fractures and a protective effect of increased dietary calcium. (1)

(1) Office of Family Health (OFH) Nutrition and Physical Activity Position Paper (based on 2001 Healthy Teens Survey data)(2) Changing the Scene (3) OFH Nutrition and Physical Activity Position Paper (based on 1999 Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force data)