

Here's to Your Health

Have you seen school kids and thought to yourself, “they’re big!” It’s happening all over the country. A Mayo Clinic report on childhood obesity mirrors what our jogging President Bill Clinton summed up, to paraphrase, that we’re eating more than we burn off. One in 6 of all children and adolescents, 17%, are obese according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This is three times higher than it was only one generation ago.

Leaf through any magazine or newspaper, turn on the TV or listen to the radio. We get hit with heavy advertising that promotes less healthy food and less exercise. Children are especially vulnerable because they are so dependent on grown-ups for their food and activities. Many schools now offer sugar drinks and unhealthy snacks, although more are now looking into healthier foods and menus. A mere 18% of all students have the opportunity for one hour of aerobic exercise each day. Only 1/3 of students take PE classes. Half of American’s children don’t have access to a park, community center, or even sidewalk in their neighborhood where they can be active in a safe environment. Many people can’t get to supermarkets that sell healthy food or afford healthy food. High calorie food and sugar drinks are more available nowadays. Portion sizes have increased. Children aged 8 to 18 spending an average 7.5 hours a day using entertainment media, so that they aren’t exercising.

Tom Vilsack, Agriculture Secretary in the Obama Administration, stressed the importance of keeping kids healthy so they can learn and thrive and stay competitive with students around the globe. The U.S. Department of Agriculture funded projects to deal with the increased incidence of obesity. On April 20, it awarded a five-year, \$25 million grant to the University of Hawaii to develop strategies to prevent obesity among Pacific Islanders.

The project’s goal is to help young children maintain healthy weight and prevent obesity through engaging the community. Dr. Rachel Novotny of the UH leads a research team that includes scientists from colleges and universities in both Anchorage and Fairbanks, Alaska; Northern Mariana Islands; Guam; American Samoa; Micronesia, and the UH’s Windward and Kapiolani Community Colleges. They will work with communities to develop culturally-specific intervention strategies, focusing on physical activity, nutritional intake, and the amount of sleep children get each night.

The Mayo Clinic identified several factors that increase the risk of being overweight:
Diet – eating high calorie foods such as baked goods, vending machine snacks, fast foods, soft drinks, candy, and desserts.

Lack of exercise – children don’t burn enough calories when they use their time in activities such as watching TV or playing video games.

Family history – it’s easier to gain weight in a family environment where high calorie food is always available and physical activity isn’t encouraged.

Psychological factors – some children overeat to cope with problems, fight boredom, or deal with emotions such as stress.

Family factors – children have greater risk of obesity if they live in homes with greater availability of convenience foods such as cookies, chips, and other high calorie items.

Socioeconomic factors – children from low-income backgrounds are at greater risk of obesity because they may lack the time or resources to exercise or eat a healthy diet.

On another note, here are some bills the Legislature passed that are related to health.

Requires hospitals to allow advanced practice registered nurses to practice within full scope of allowable practice, including as a primary care provider. [HB 484 Advanced Practice Registered Nurse](#)

Conditional permits for group living facilities automatically terminates if it fails to begin operations before the end of the one year period or stops operating as such for one year. [HB 1654 Termination of Permits; Group Homes](#)

For community care foster family homes approved for three clients, primary caregiver must be a certified nurse aide and substitute caregiver must be a nurse aide who has completed specified training. Facility must be certified and operating for at least one year before being certified for a third client. [HB 739 Community Care Foster Family Homes](#)

Increases the civil penalty amounts and additional criminal fines for violations of the Hawaii occupational safety and health law. [SB 1040 Occupational Safety and Health](#)

Creates the food safety and security program in the agricultural industry based on scientific, risk reducing food production practices, to reduce the risk of food-borne diseases. [HB 667 Food Safety and Security Program](#)

Each health care facility shall report information about infections, including those that are resistant to multiple drugs, to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's national healthcare safety network. [HB 889 Health Care-Associated Infection Reporting](#)

Expands definition of "quality assurance committee" to include interdisciplinary quality assurance committees composed of members of various health care organizations. [HB 597 Peer Review Protections](#)

Authorizes Insurance Commissioner to enforce consumer protections and market reforms relating to federal Patient Protection & Affordable Care Act. [SB 1273 Health Insurance](#)

Provides uniform standards for external review procedures based on the national Uniform Health Carrier External Review Model Act, to comply with the requirements of the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010. [SB 1274 Insurance; Health; External Review Procedure](#)

Establishes the Hawaii health connector to create a health insurance exchange per the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, and creates a Hawaii Health Insurance Exchange. [SB 1348 Hawaii Health Insurance Exchange](#)

Amends date when Hawaii Health Authority must submit findings and recommendations to the Legislature. [HB 863 Hawaii Health Authority](#)

To see the complete text of these bills, go to www.capitol.hawaii.gov and click on "Bill Status," type in the bill number in the "Measure History" box, then click on the bill number.