The Obesity Epidemic and Arkansas Students

What is the problem?

The 2009 Arkansas Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicates that among high school students:

Obesity

- 14% were obese (students who were ≥ 95th percentile for body mass index, by age and sex, based on reference data).

Unhealthy Dietary Behaviors

- 85% ate fruits and vegetables less than five times per day during the 7 days before the survey. (1)
- 74% ate fruit or drank 100% fruit juices less than two times per day during the 7 days before the survey.
- 88% ate vegetables less than three times per day during the 7 days before the survey. (2)
- 34% drank a can, bottle, or glass of soda or pop at least one time per day during the 7 days before the survey. (3)

Physical Inactivity

- 19% did not participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity on any day during the 7 days before the survey. (4)
- 76% were physically active at least 60 minutes per day on less than 7 days during the 7 days before the survey. (4)
- 61% did not attend physical education (PE) classes in an average week when they were in school.
- 77% did not attend PE classes daily when they were in school.
- 36% watched television 3 or more hours per day on an average school day.
- 21% used computers 3 or more hours per day on an average school day. (5)

What are the solutions?

Better health education • More PE and physical activity programs • Healthier school environments

What is the status?

The 2008 Arkansas School Health Profiles indicates that among high schools:

Health Education

- 40% required students to take two or more health education courses.
- 85% taught 14 key nutrition and dietary behavior topics in a required course.
- 84% taught 12 key physical activity topics in a required course.

PE and Physical Activity

- 67% taught a required PE course in all grades in the school.
- 50% did not allow students to be exempted from taking a required PE course for certain reasons. (6)
- 47% offered opportunities for all students to participate in intramural activities or physical activity clubs.

School Environment

- 43% did not sell less nutritious foods and beverages anywhere outside the school food service program.
- 0% always offered fruits or non-fried vegetables in vending machines and school stores, canteens, or snack bars, and during celebrations when foods and beverages are offered.
- 30% prohibited all forms of advertising and promotion of candy, fast food restaurants, or soft drinks in all locations. (7)
- 71% used the School Health Index or a similar self-assessment tool to assess their policies, activities, and programs in physical activity.
- 71% used the School Health Index or a similar self-assessment tool to assess their policies, activities, and programs in nutrition.

1. 100% fruit juice, fruit, green salad, potatoes (excluding French fries, fried potatoes, or potato chips), carrots, or other vegetables.
2. Green salad, potatoes (excluding French fries, fried potatoes, or potato chips), carrots, or other vegetables.
3. Not including diet soda or diet pop.
4. Doing any kind of physical activty that increased their heart rate and made them breathe hard some of the time.
5. Played video or computer games or used a computer for something that was not school work.
6. Enrollment in other courses, participation in school sports, participation in other school activities, participation in community sports activities, high physical fitness competency test score, participation in vocational training, and participation in community service activities.
7. In school buildings; on school grounds, including on the outside of the school building, on playing fields, or other areas of the campus; on school buses or other vehicles used to transport students; and in school publications.

Where can I get more information? Visit www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth or call 800–CDC–INFO (800–232–4636).

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
Division of Adolescent and School Health