

Advocates Team Up Against Childhood Obesity

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COLUMBUS, Ohio — A new report by the Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease (PFCD) provides a frightening glimpse into the future health of Ohio. And the view isn't pretty.



AP Image

The study, "The Future Cost of Obesity: National and State Estimates of the Impact of Obesity on Direct Health Care

Expenses," shows the toll it will take not only on quality of life, but on the cost of care. Researchers say obesity rates will reach higher than 50 percent in Ohio and health care costs linked to the problem will surpass \$16 billion for the state, \$1,800 per person.

In 2008 nearly 34 percent of Ohioans were considered obese. That's higher than the national average. Even more frightening than the obesity rates in adults might be the prevalence of obesity in children.

In the past 20 years, the number of overweight children ages 6 to 11 has doubled, and the number of overweight teenagers has tripled. Nearly 50 percent of Columbus' inner city third graders are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight

"The increasing rates of obesity in Ohio are alarming," said Columbus Public Health Commissioner Dr. Teresa Long. "Columbus Public Health is dedicated to working in our community to fight this epidemic."

The Healthy Choices for Healthy Children coalition, a group of businesses and health care advocates, including Columbus Public Health, is now pushing for new standards to make Ohio children healthier.

The group is backing a bipartisan bill that is designed to get kids active, and improve their nutrition at school.

It would require that schools provide 30 minutes of physical activity a day, and increase required phys-ed time for high school students. In addition, teachers would be required to be licensed in physical education.

But exercise isn't the only ingredient in the recipe to improve our children's health. The coalition is also pushing schools to offer more nutritional food and beverages in vending machines and on cafeteria menus.

In an interview with the Columbus Dispatch, one of the bill sponsors, Representative John Patrick Carney, D-Columbus, called obesity "the biggest preventable health crisis facing Americans today."

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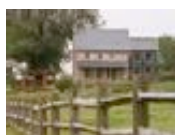
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