

Child nutrition is a basic foundation of health

Good nutrition during pregnancy and childhood decreases the risk of prematurity, fetal or infant death, anemia and subsequent obesity and other chronic illnesses. Just like pediatricians vaccinate to protect children against illnesses like the flu, so too can we protect children against chronic illness brought on by overweight or obesity by supporting strong federal policies and programs in the following areas:

Early nutrition

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) fight food insecurity and promote nutrition in early childhood.

- The science-based WIC food package provides essential supplemental nutrition to low-income and nutritionally vulnerable pregnant and breastfeeding moms, and children up to five years of age.
- WIC improves birth outcomes and the health of infants, supports breastfeeding moms through education and peer support and connects families to medical care.
- CACFP provides more than 3 million children in child care, Head Start and afterschool settings with healthy, balanced meals throughout the day.

School-based nutrition

Nearly 1 in 3 school-age children and adolescents in the United States is overweight or obese.

Obese children are at increased risk for high blood pressure, high cholesterol, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, sleep apnea, asthma, joint problems, fatty liver disease, and social and psychological problems.

- Since children typically consume up to half of their daily calories in school, the nutritional quality of school meals through the National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs as well as competitive foods plays a key role in promoting child health.
- The updated nutritional quality for school meals under the *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010* (HHFKA) will ensure that children receive more servings of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat or nonfat milk, and consume less sodium and unhealthy fat.
- Already, more than 90% of schools are meeting or exceeding these criteria.

Food insecurity and child hunger

Good nutrition is not only an essential component of chronic disease prevention and treatment; it also helps treat the effects of chronic hunger.

- One in six children in this country lives in households where food is scarce and may experience educational, health and behavioral problems as a result.
- Under the HHFKA, the Community Eligibility Provision is reducing hunger and maximizing program efficiency by allowing schools in high poverty areas to reach even more children with free meals.
- Lack of access to nutritious foods during out-of-school time, particularly in the summer months, makes millions of children vulnerable to illness, hospitalization and behavioral health challenges.

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