



# Healthy Eating and Active Living of Adults and Young Children in Arizona

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE AHS 2010



Our personal health is influenced by far more than our genes or whether or not we routinely see a doctor. How we behave plays a major role in influencing our health. In fact, 40 percent of deaths in the United States are attributed to poor health behaviors, such as unhealthy eating or lack of exercise.

In turn, how we behave is influenced by many external factors – not just our personal will or initiative. If you live in a neighborhood that is unsafe, you are less likely to exercise. If you have few grocery stores selling fresh fruits and vegetables in your area, you are less likely to eat healthy. If you live near a park, you are more likely to engage in physical activity.

This issue of *HealthTakes* looks at data related to healthy eating and active living from the 2010 Arizona Health Survey. The report also looks at disparities that exist based on various characteristics such as gender, age, race/ethnicity, education and income.

Some of the report's findings include:

- **Income is related to how healthy you eat.** People with higher incomes are more likely to eat recommended servings of fruits and vegetables and less likely to drink soda or other soft drinks. Young children (ages 2-5) in higher income families were also more likely to drink low-fat milk – a practice recommended by pediatricians.
- **And whether you exercise or not.** About half of young children in families with annual incomes of \$50,000 were physically active for at least 60 minutes daily, compared to less than one-third in families with \$20,000-\$29,999 annual income.
- **Kids are not eating their vegetables.** Only one-in-five children ages 2-5 are eating three or more vegetables daily.
- **But they are eating sweets.** Six-out-of-ten young children (ages 2-5) ate sweets daily. Sixty-one percent ate fast food weekly.
- **Race and ethnicity play a role.** Native American/American Indian children eat the highest servings of sweets daily. Native American/American Indian and Hispanic/Latino children were less likely to be physically active for at least 60 minutes than other racial/ethnic groups. Non-Hispanic Whites on average consume more servings of soda than Hispanic/Latinos, and Non-Hispanic White children ages 2-5 are more likely to consume sugary sweets than Hispanics/Latinos.

The report also suggests a number of risk factors that policymakers may want to address to encourage healthy eating and active living.

- **Education matters.** Higher educational attainment increases the odds of eating more fruits and vegetables. It also decreases the likelihood of eating fast food. Educated adults were more likely to do vigorous and moderate physical activities and on average spend more days on these activities weekly.
- **Access to healthy foods makes a difference.** The number of stores nearby that sell fresh fruits and vegetables was positively associated with the amount of fruit consumed daily. It also lowered the odds of consuming soda and other soft drinks.
- **Parks allow people to live healthier.** Adults with parks, playgrounds and open space within walking distance of their homes had higher odds of doing vigorous and moderate physical activities and spent more days on these activities weekly. Similarly, the odds and the number of days a child went to a park increased with the availability of a park, playground or open space within walking distance of the child's home.
- **Greater awareness is needed on appropriate milk and juice consumption.** Young children in Arizona are not drinking enough milk. They are also not consuming the right *kind* of milk. Nearly a third of young children ages 2-3 drank whole milk. Similarly, lower income children had higher consumption of fruit juice than children in higher income families. Health experts recommend that young children drink less fat or calorie-laden drinks such as fat-free or low-fat milk or water. They also recommend whole fruit over 100 percent fruit juice consumption.



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2929 N Central Ave, Suite 1550, Phoenix Arizona 85012 | 602.385.6500 ph | 602.385.6510 fx