

# Physical Activity, Nutrition and Weight, 2012

Eating a healthy diet, being physically active, and maintaining a healthy body weight are essential for an individual's overall health. These three factors, taken together, can help lower a person's risk of developing conditions such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer. They can also help prevent existing health conditions from worsening over time.<sup>1</sup> Food insecurity directly impacts the ability of individuals to consume a healthy diet that promotes overall health and prevents and controls disease.

A 2010 survey found that only one of every three Maine adults aged 18 years and older (35.6%) was at a healthy weight. The percentage of adults who were overweight remained essentially the same between 2000 and 2010 (36.9% and 36.7%, respectively), while the percentage of adults who were obese increased significantly, from 20.3% to 27.7%.<sup>2</sup> In 2011, nearly two-thirds (62.2%) of Maine high school students reported that they did not attend physical education classes in school in an average week, significantly higher than the 48.2% reported nationally.<sup>3</sup> More than a third (37.5%) of Maine high school students said they ate fruit or drank 100% fruit juices less than once a day during the preceding seven days, similar to the national figure of 36.0%.<sup>3</sup> The prevalence of food insecurity has increased in Maine. In 2008-2010, 15.4% of households were uncertain of having, or unable to get, enough food to meet the needs of all household members due to not having enough money or other resources for food, up from 9.4% in 1999-2001.<sup>2</sup>



Physical activity, nutrition, and weight related measures chosen for the State Health Assessment include:<sup>2</sup>

- Physical activity among children
- No leisure time physical activity among adults
- Five or more fruits and vegetables per day among children and adults
- Food insecurity among households
- Overweight and obesity among children
- Weight status according to body mass index among adults

Estimates for physical activity, nutrition and weight measures in the State Health Assessment vary across population groups in Maine. For example, male high school students were significantly more likely to be overweight or obese than were female students. Adults aged 18 years and older who identified themselves as non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native were significantly less likely to be at a healthy weight than were non-Hispanic White adults. Adults with less education were less likely than those with more education to report eating five or more servings of fruit or vegetables per day. The percentage of high school students and adults who ate fruits and vegetables five or more times per day was significantly lower in Aroostook County than in the state as a whole.<sup>2</sup>

Healthy Maine 2020 also has objectives related to physical activity, nutrition, and weight, including:<sup>4</sup>

- Reduce the proportion of children and adolescents who are considered obese
- Increase the proportion of adults who are at a healthy weight
- Increase the proportion of students who attend daily physical education (PE) at school
- Reduce the percentage of households experiencing food insecurity
- Increase fruit and vegetable consumption among adults and children

Additional objectives related to physical activity, nutrition, and weight can be found in other sections of Healthy Maine 2020, including Chronic Disease and Mental Health.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Healthy People 2020. Leading health indicators: nutrition, physical activity, and obesity overview and impact. Available from: <http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/LHI/nutrition.aspx> (accessed 6/4/2013).

<sup>2</sup> Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention. State health assessment – 2012. Available from: <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/phdata/sha/index.shtml> (accessed 6/3/2013).

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Youth online: high school YRBS. Available from: <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/App/Default.aspx> (accessed 6/4/2013).

<sup>4</sup> Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Healthy Maine 2020. Available from: <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/healthy-maine/index.shtml>.