

Prevention of Obesity in Children and Young People



NSW
Government
Action Plan
2003-2007

www.health.nsw.gov.au/obesity



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Foreword

In the decade 1985-1995, Australia saw sharp increases in the number of overweight and obese children. Around a quarter of Australian children are now overweight or obese, and conservative estimates suggest that this is increasing by at least 1% per year. These figures do not augur well for the future health and wellbeing of our communities.



In recognition of the problems of childhood obesity, the NSW Government convened the Childhood Obesity Summit in September 2002. Representatives from government, community, industry, parents and young people came together to propose practical solutions to address overweight and obesity in our children and young people. There were some key urgent messages from the Summit. In response to these resolutions and key messages the NSW Government has developed this *Action Plan* to prevent obesity among our children and young people.

This cross-government response is a significant achievement and recognises the range of initiatives required to tackle an issue as complex as overweight and obesity. It represents a commitment by the Government to help build healthy environments and provide better opportunities for our children and young people to become more active and make healthier food choices. The response to childhood obesity must come from the community as a whole, not only from governments. This *Action Plan* provides a starting point from which we can all work together to secure the health and well being of the people of NSW.

We thank all those who contributed to the Childhood Obesity Summit and those involved in developing this *Action Plan*.

The Hon R.J Carr, MP
Premier

The Hon Morris Iemma, MP
Minister for Health



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Background

Introduction

Overweight and obesity is a serious, chronic medical condition. The most common consequences of obesity in childhood and adolescence are those related to body image and self-esteem.¹ Obesity in childhood is also associated with significant physical health effects. These include raised blood pressure, high cholesterol and elevated blood sugar.² There is an increasing number of cases of type 2 diabetes being diagnosed in Australian adolescents.³ Other problems include orthopaedic complications due to excessive weight bearing upon joints, sleep apnoea, asthma and fatty liver.⁴

In the ten-year period from 1985-1995 the level of combined overweight/obesity in Australian children more than doubled, whilst the level of obesity tripled in all age groups and for both sexes.⁵ The rate of increase in Australia seems to be accelerating sharply.

Obese children have a 25-50% chance of progression to adult obesity and it may be as high as 78% in older obese adolescents.⁶ Overweight and obesity develops over time. Once it occurs it is difficult to treat. Prevention of weight gain offers the most effective means of controlling obesity. This means we need to start with children and young people.

Weight gain and obesity develops when the energy intake from food and drink exceeds energy expenditure from physical activity and other metabolic processes. The trends in these behaviours are not encouraging. For example, mean intake of energy increased by over 10% among Australian children aged 10-15 years between 1985 and 1995.⁷

Data from the NSW Child Health Survey 2001 found 40% of children aged 5-12 years reportedly watch two hours or more of television or videos a day on average, and 15% are reported to play computer games for an hour or more a day on average. Such sedentary leisure time pursuits are now widely available to children and are replacing more traditional active pastimes.



¹ Hill, A. and Silver, E. Fat, friendliness and Unhealthy: 9 year old children's perceptions of body shape and stereotypes. *International Journal of Obesity Related metabolic Disorders* 1995; 19(6), 423-30.

² Ebbeling, C., Pawiak, D. and Ludwig, D. Childhood Obesity: public health crisis, common sense cure. *The Lancet* 2002; 360:473-482.

³ A/Professor Louise Baur, The Children's Hospital at Westmead, *Personal Communication*.

⁴ Ebbeling, op. cit.

⁵ Margarey, A., Daniels, L. and Boulton, T. Prevalence of overweight and obesity in Australian children and adolescents: reassessment of 1985 and 1995 data against new standard international definitions. *Med J Aust* 2001; 174:561-564

⁶ Must, A., and Strauss, R. Risk and consequences of childhood and adolescent obesity. *Int J Obes* 1999; 23 (Suppl 2): S2-S11.

⁷ Cook, P. Rutishauser, I.H.E. and Seelig, M. *Comparable data on food and nutrient intake and physical measurements from the 1983, 1985 and 1995 national nutrition surveys*. Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, Canberra. 2001.

The NSW Childhood Obesity Summit

In recognition of the growing problem of childhood overweight and obesity, the NSW Government convened the Childhood Obesity Summit, held at Parliament House, from 10-12 September 2002. Summit delegates included international and national health experts, industry groups, key health and nutrition organisations, representatives of schools and the food and advertising industries, parents and youth, Government and community organisations. At the end of the three days the Summit had proposed 145 resolutions.

The Development of this Action Plan

In response to the Summit, the NSW Government has developed the:

- i NSW Government response to the Summit's communiqué.
- ii *Prevention of Obesity in Children and Young People: NSW Government Action Plan 2003-2007.*

This *Action Plan* builds on the Government's response to the resolutions, and identifies seven key priority areas in which the Government will be making an accelerated effort to prevent childhood obesity in NSW:

- 1 Healthier Schools
- 2 An Active Community
- 3 Support for Parents
- 4 Healthy Child and Out-of-School Care
- 5 Community Understanding
- 6 Increasing our Knowledge
- 7 Governments, Industry and the Community Working Together

The *Action Plan* aims to:

- increase healthy nutrition, increase physical activity and decrease sedentary living to prevent childhood overweight and obesity
- provide quality programs, services and infrastructure to increase physical activity, decrease sedentary living and increase healthy nutrition
- achieve social, health, economic and environmental benefits arising from the prevention of childhood overweight and obesity.

The focus is on the Government working together with the community, industry and relevant organisations to create communities in which children can live more productive and healthy lives.

The NSW Government is also working at the national level to take action against obesity. NSW is participating in the National Obesity Task Force, which has been charged with preparing a report and action plan towards the end of 2003.

In the *NSW Childhood Obesity Summit Government Response* and this *Action Plan*, the NSW Government has taken responsibility for state level issues and will progress national issues through the National Obesity Task Force.

Priority 1

Healthier Schools

Children and young people spend a large proportion of their time at school. It is vital that young people are provided with a healthy environment at school, including nutritious food choices and opportunities for physical activity.

School canteens in NSW are one of the major take away food markets in the state with about 2700 schools providing a canteen service. A child who regularly purchases lunch and snacks from the school canteen eats a substantial portion of their daily food intake from this source. Ensuring the provision of nutritious foods in canteens provides a significant opportunity to improve children's dietary behaviours.

The Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) curriculum is an integral part of the core curriculum for both primary and secondary students, and works to support the development of the student as a whole person. The purpose of the curriculum is to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to understand, value and lead healthy and fulfilling lifestyles.

Identifying and promoting programs that help young people acquire fundamental movement skills is an especially important part of PDHPE. Fundamental movement skills (eg run, throw, jump) are basic movements necessary for participation in a variety of activities and exercises. A large proportion of young people do not attain proficiency in fundamental movement skills during their school years. This may make it difficult for them to participate in the full range of physical activities important for development and make it more unlikely that they will participate in physical activity throughout their lives.

School sport is also a compulsory part of the school's curriculum and contributes to a child's development of fundamental movement skills. The refocusing of school sport programs on participation by all, and not just elite performers, will be an important part of the Government's plan.



1. Healthier Schools – Our Priority Actions

Objective	Action	How This Action Will Make A Difference	Related Summit Resolutions
<p>To improve the nutritional value of food and drinks sold in school canteens.</p>	<p>1.1 The Department of Education and Training and NSW Health will develop a mandatory healthy school canteen framework that ensures all Government schools (and encourages other schools) provide a canteen service that provides healthy and nutritious food consistent with the national dietary guidelines.</p>	<p>1.1 School canteens can be a major source of food for children and young people. Canteens that only sell healthy and nutritious food encourage good eating habits and can improve the diet of many students.</p> <p>The framework will require schools to base their menus on foods from the following broad categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fruit • vegetables and legumes • breads, cereals, pasta and noodles • milk, yoghurt, cheese • lean meat, fish, poultry, eggs and nuts. <p>Commercial food products will be required to meet agreed nutrient criteria in order to be sold in canteens. Foods high in sugar and/or fat that fall outside of the 5 food groups will only be sold on 'special' occasions to be consistent with national dietary guidelines.</p>	<p>3.14, 7.1</p>
	<p>1.2 The Department of Education and Training, NSW Health and the NSW School Canteen Association will develop and distribute information to assist schools to implement the healthy school canteen framework.</p>	<p>1.2 It is recognised that the framework will require significant changes for many schools. The development of information and support materials such as the following will assist schools in the transition period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • checklists to assess the nutritional value of food currently sold • basic nutrition facts • hints on developing a nutrition policy • foods to limit and healthy alternatives • guidelines on how to negotiate a healthy leased canteen • promotional ideas. 	<p>3.14, 7.1</p>



Objective	Action	How This Action Will Make A Difference	Related Summit Resolutions
	<p>1.3 NSW Health will increase funding for the NSW School Canteen Association.</p>	<p>1.3 Increased funding for the NSW School Canteen Association will improve the ability of the Association to provide information and help school canteens provide healthier menus.</p>	<p>3.13, 3.14 (in part)</p>
<p>To increase students' opportunities to participate in activities that develop fundamental movement skills.</p>	<p>1.4 NSW Health will fund the School Sport Foundation to maintain and strengthen its grants program to NSW schools.</p>	<p>1.4 The School Sport Foundation Grants promote increased participation in sport, and activities supportive of fundamental movement skills. Research indicates that children who possess fundamental movement skills are more likely to participate in physical activity.</p>	<p>3.1, 3.4 (in part)</p>
	<p>1.5 The Department of Education and Training will work with schools and key stakeholders to develop plans for the revitalisation of secondary school sports programs.</p>	<p>1.5 The plans will help schools and teachers to increase students' participation in programs designed to develop social, movement and game skills. The plans will promote the benefits for all students, not just elite performers, in being engaged in physical activity.</p>	<p>3.1 (in part), 3.3, 3.4 (in part)</p>
	<p>1.6 The Department of Education and Training will provide resources to teachers to help them implement and supervise a range of sport programs and physical activities.</p>	<p>1.6 These resources will assist in the implementation of the secondary school sports plans outlined above.</p>	<p>3.1 (in part), 3.3, 3.4 (in part)</p>
	<p>1.7 The Department of Education and Training will provide professional support for teachers to implement the new Years 7-10 Personal Development, Health and Physical Education syllabus. This will include teaching and learning materials developed and published online, and articles focusing on physical activity published in <i>Curriculum Support</i>.</p>	<p>1.7 This action will improve the knowledge of Personal Development, Health and Physical Education teachers of obesity, physical activity, fundamental movement skills and the elements necessary to develop lifelong physical activity habits of young people. With this knowledge and professional support, Personal Development, Health and Physical Education teachers will be better able to assist young people to develop lifelong physical activity habits.</p>	<p>3.2 (in part), 3.4</p>

Objective	Action	How This Action Will Make A Difference	Related Summit Resolutions
	<p>1.8 The Department of Education and Training will develop and distribute resources about school-based strategies for getting students active.</p>	<p>1.8 The resource materials will provide schools with ideas and strategies that encourage students to participate in physical activity in school time. They will include strategies for teaching and learning fundamental movement skills.</p>	<p>3.1 (in part), 3.3 (in part), 3.4 (in part), 3.11</p>
	<p>1.9 The NSW Government will support the Rock Eisteddfod Challenge and Croc Festivals throughout NSW.</p>	<p>1.9 The Rock Eisteddfod delivers positive health and lifestyle messages for secondary school students while developing the creative and artistic talents of over 30,000 students who participate each year. It also provides an opportunity for students to participate in physical activity through the performing arts, rather than through traditional 'sport' type activities.</p> <p>The Croc Festival involves both indigenous and non-indigenous young people in regional and remote communities in a three-day festival. The festival includes a variety of performing arts, sports clinics, and careers markets. Whilst the initial aim of the Croc Festival was drug prevention, it has become a vehicle that promotes a range of healthy choices in the lives of young people.</p>	<p>3.7, 4.11, 4.15, 4.16</p>



Priority 2

An Active Community

There is compelling evidence that an active lifestyle benefits individuals and can extend to social, environmental and economic benefits for the whole community. Participation in physical activity has been shown to help young people gain self-esteem, develop social responsibility, fair-play and a sense of discipline. It also helps improve the quality of the environment and encourages participation in community development actions.



The environment in which we now live often discourages participation in physical activity. Short trips are increasingly being made in cars. Technological 'labour saving devices' reduce energy expenditure. Perceived issues of community safety can limit time spent outside the home, while the design of suburbs can influence people's transport getting to school and work or shopping.

'Active transport' refers to physical activity undertaken as a means of transport. This can include walking and cycling. It also refers to the use of public transport, as most public transport trips require a walk or cycle trip at either end. There are demonstrated health benefits from 30 minutes a day of moderate intensity physical activity (which can be accumulated in 10 minute lots). There are also indirect health benefits related to reduction of air and noise pollution and use of fossil fuels.

Encouraging active forms of transport to and from school, including using public transport, is one way to increase physical activity and encourage the development of healthy commuting habits, which can be transferred into later life.

To make cycling and walking more accessible, it is important that facilities for cyclists and pedestrians are further improved. Walking and cycling opportunities must be safe and serve as connections to facilities the community uses as part of daily life (eg schools, shops, and libraries).

2. An Active Community – Our Priority Actions

Objective	Action	How This Action Will Make A Difference	Related Summit Resolutions
To increase opportunities for children and young people to participate in physical activity in the community.	2.1 The Department of Sport and Recreation will modify the Active Communities Grants Scheme to increase the focus on preventing childhood obesity.	2.1 Project criteria for funding under the Active Communities Grants Scheme will now have a focus on preventing childhood obesity. This will help increase the number of projects aimed at preventing childhood obesity. The NSW Active Communities Grants Scheme aims to increase opportunities for people in NSW, particularly those from disadvantaged communities or under-represented groups, to participate in physical activity at the community level. Organisations are encouraged to develop innovative programs that attract new participants to their sport or activity.	1.14, 2.9, 3.10, 5.12, 6.13
	2.2 The Department of Sport and Recreation will work through the members of the Active Communities Network to strengthen the understanding of childhood obesity issues and the role of physical activity in preventing it.	2.2 The Active Communities Network (coordinated by the Department of Sport and Recreation) will be able to provide increased support to Councils, Area Health Services and community physical activity providers to encourage greater participation in physical activity in their local communities as a means of preventing childhood obesity.	2.2 (in part), 2.9, 3.10, 5.3 (in part), 5.6, 5.8, 5.9, 6.1, 6.2, 6.4 (in part), 6.5, 6.6 (in part), 6.12, 6.13, 6.15 (in part), 9.4, 9.9
Increase community awareness of the benefits of active transport.	2.3 The NSW Government will promote walking and cycling through strategies such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bike Week. • Sponsorship of appropriate cycling and walking events, eg Walk Safely to School Day. • Promotion of cycling at retail outlets and RTA Motor Registries. • Publication of cycleways maps. 	2.3 More cycling and walking facilities will increase children and young people's opportunities for physical activity. The promotions will particularly address a major barrier to children's involvement in walking and cycling – the perception that cycling and walking are unsafe activities for children. The use of the off-road shared paths that have been constructed by the Government will be emphasised.	9.9, 9.15, 9.16, 9.17

Objective	Action	How This Action Will Make A Difference	Related Summit Resolutions
To increase opportunities for active transport.	2.4 The Roads and Traffic Authority will maintain its commitment to building off-road cycleways wherever practicable. These off-road cycle paths will link resident areas to parks, schools, shopping centres, sports grounds and other local facilities.	2.4 More off-road cycleway networks will increase children and young people's opportunities for safe physical activity as they go about their day to day lives.	5.6, 6.12, 9.4, 9.9
	2.5 The Roads and Traffic Authority support local government to develop and construct local cycleway networks. This includes funding assistance to councils for local network development and construction.	2.5 More local cycleway networks will increase children and young people's opportunities for physical activity. Many of these council projects will provide safer access for students to ride their bikes to school and other destinations.	4.12, 5.16, 6.13, 9.9
	2.6 The Roads and Traffic Authority will assist local councils to create integrated pedestrian networks by providing financial assistance and expertise to develop Pedestrian and Access Mobility Plans.	2.6 The plans identify existing pedestrian facilities and determine where access and mobility can be improved. This will provide better pedestrian facilities and will increase children and young people's opportunities for physical activity.	9.4
To build the capacity of local government to promote healthy and active communities.	2.7 NSW Health will fund a Public Health Policy Officer position at the Local Government Association of NSW and the Shires Association of NSW.	2.7 The Public Health Policy Officer will work with Local Government to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase the profile of public health and issues such as overweight and obesity in local government • identify areas where NSW Health and local government can collaborate to improve public health and the implementation of agreed strategies • increase the capacity for the Local Government Association of NSW and the Shires Association of NSW to lead and participate in the development and promotion of public health policies. 	6.4, 6.7, 6.10



Priority 3

Supporting Parents

There is emerging evidence that the earliest opportunity to influence overweight and obesity in children and young people is through the breastfeeding of infants. Recent studies indicate that the prevalence of obesity is lower in children that have been breastfed.

Breastfeeding is also associated with improved general health, physical growth and mental development of infants. It also provides protection against a number of acute and chronic diseases during childhood and adult life. New mothers need to be supported in their efforts to start and maintain breastfeeding.

Parents need reliable and accessible information on the health problems of obesity and how to prevent it. They also need practical ideas and strategies to provide healthy meals, promote physical activity and reduce sedentary pursuits such as TV viewing. Research suggests that factors such as the availability of healthy food and play opportunities in the home, rules about play and television viewing and family meal structures are likely to be important influences on the development of children's eating and physical activity behaviours.

Parents also need to know where to find support and help if they are experiencing difficulties. At least 20% of children in NSW are already suffering from overweight and obesity. The health services that families use need to be adequately skilled to effectively manage children and young people to become a healthy weight.



3. Supporting Parents – Our Priority Actions

Objective	Action	How This Action Will Make A Difference	Related Summit Resolutions
<p>To give children a healthy start through breastfeeding.</p>	<p>3.1 NSW Health will increase the support available to women to breastfeed, including providing additional funding to the NSW Branch of the Australian Breastfeeding Association.</p>	<p>3.1 Women will be able to give their child a healthy start if their breastfeeding is supported. Increased funding will enable the Australian Breastfeeding Association to increase its support for breastfeeding women through its helpline.</p>	<p>1.8, 2.3, 4.13</p>
	<p>3.2 NSW Health will reinforce breastfeeding policies and services and encourage health professionals to support breastfeeding.</p>	<p>3.2 Updated and consistent breastfeeding policies and services in NSW will improve breastfeeding support to women. Involving the Australian Breastfeeding Association, lactation consultants, family health services and obstetricians in reviewing policies will ensure this and further raise awareness within the health system of the importance of breastfeeding.</p>	<p>1.8, 4.13</p>
<p>To improve parents' access to information on how to prevent overweight and obesity in their children.</p>	<p>3.3 The Department of Community Services will provide access to a range of children's services, health, parenting and family support services through child and family centres.</p>	<p>3.3 Child care centres could be a good place for parents to obtain child and family health and parenting information, including information on how to prevent overweight and obesity in their children. The Department of Community Services strategy will help determine if this is the case, and the best models for such 'one-stop shop' child care centres.</p>	<p>1.9</p>
	<p>3.4 NSW Health will increase support and information for parents about overweight and obesity through 'Families First'.</p>	<p>3.4 Parents will be able to get information and support about overweight and obesity prevention through the Families First network. This includes playgroups, pre-schools, health clinics, parenting skills courses, family support workers, nurse home visiting and other services that help parents of 0-8 year olds give their children the best start in life.</p>	<p>1.1, 2.1 (in part), 2.3</p>

Objective	Action	How This Action Will Make A Difference	Related Summit Resolutions
To improve access to support and treatment services for overweight and obese children and young people.	3.5 NSW Health will bring together an Expert Taskforce to provide recommendations on overweight and obesity support services across the state.	3.5 Support and treatment services for overweight and obese children and young people are varied throughout NSW and can be limited. The recommendations of this Expert Taskforce will assist NSW Health in developing appropriate support and treatment services including education and training, clinical services, and evaluation and research.	1.1, 1.13 (in part), 2.1, 4.3 (in part), 4.4 (in part), 4.18 (in part), 4.19 (in part)



Priority 4

Healthy Child and Out-of-School Care

Children often spend a significant amount of their time in child care or out-of-school care. Over 100,000 children a day attend licensed child care services in NSW. Children attending early childhood services are aged from 0-6 years of age and can be in care for up to 11 hours per day. Long Day care services often provide cooked meals and morning and afternoon tea for children.

In addition, approximately 30,000 school-age children in NSW attend care before and after school in out-of-school hours care services. Children can be attending these services for up to five hours each day.

It is important that these facilities provide an environment that encourages participation in physical activity and healthy food choices.

Over the past decade there appears to have been a trend to children becoming less active, particularly in the 3:00pm-6:00pm period after school. There is a clear need for a diverse range of physical activity options for children that are flexible and focus on fun.

The following actions will improve nutrition and physical activity in child care programs, focussing on active, healthy and supervised fun.



4. Healthy Child and Out-of-School Care – Our Priority Actions

Objective	Action	How This Action Will Make A Difference	Related Summit Resolutions
To increase the provision of physical activity and good nutrition in child care throughout NSW.	4.1 NSW Health and the Department of Community Services will provide nutrition information and advice about good practice in physical activity to children's services.	4.1 Child care centres will be able to improve their nutrition and physical activity practices. The licensing process and monitoring visits that will occur during implementation of the new Children's Services Regulation offer an excellent opportunity to provide information and advice to child care centres.	1.6, 1.10
	4.2 The Department of Community Services and NSW Health will initiate discussions with organisations providing child care professionals' training programs (including undergraduate, postgraduate, and in-service) to improve training on nutrition and physical activity. Key stakeholders such as universities, TAFE and training organisations will be involved in the review.	4.2 Improved knowledge about the importance of physical activity and nutrition amongst child care professionals will improve the services provided to children in child care centres.	1.6 (in part), 1.10, 1.13
To identify the most effective approaches to delivering a positive, safe and fun physical activity experience for primary school aged children in out-of-school-hours care (OSHC) services.	4.3 The Department of Sport and Recreation will implement three active Out-of-School Hours Care pilot programs, with the following stages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • trialling of various ways of providing physical activity • development and trialling of a training program for OSHC staff • development and trialling of a start-up package for Centres • trialling of physical activity policy guidelines for OSHC centres • evaluation of the key elements of success. 	4.3 At present children in Out-of-School Hours Care are usually engaged in more sedentary forms of activity such as art and craft, reading or playing board games. OSHC staff do not necessarily possess the appropriate skills to provide physical activities, including sport. This pilot program will seek to overcome these barriers. The trial will result in recommendations about the best ways of providing physical activities, and the training and equipment requirements for physical activity programs to be conducted in OSHC centres.	1.6 (in part), 2.2

Objective	Action	How This Action Will Make A Difference	Related Summit Resolutions
To increase the capacity of the OSHC workforce to provide physical activities.	4.4 The Department of Sport and Recreation will develop and trial a physical activity training package for staff working in out-of-school hours care (OSHC) centres. It will be based on the competencies identified in the Certificate IV 'Train the Trainer' Physical Activity for Children and Youth.	4.4 As described above, OSHC staff do not necessarily possess the appropriate skills to provide physical activity. This training package will support OSHC staff in the development of appropriate skills and knowledge to provide a diverse range of physical activity opportunities for primary school children in OSHC centres.	2.7, 2.2 (in part), 5.2 (in part), 5.11



Priority 5

Community Understanding

There is poor awareness in our society of the nature and full extent of childhood overweight and obesity.

Prior to the NSW Childhood Obesity Summit, NSW Health commissioned qualitative research with parents and children to investigate needs, attitudes, knowledge and behaviours regarding health issues including overweight and obesity, physical activity and nutrition.

From this research it was evident that there is considerable opportunity to increase community understanding about the serious impact overweight and obesity can have on health, what constitutes a healthy weight, a balanced diet and healthy food. There is also a need to further understand appropriate levels of activity, and how to incorporate physical activity into everyday living.

Increasing community awareness and understanding will help provide context for the roll out of strategies to reduce childhood overweight and obesity in NSW.

Increasing the understanding of overweight and obesity within the community requires activities that:

- raise awareness of the seriousness of the problem overweight and obesity epidemic among our children
- create an understanding that the whole community needs to play a part to help our children increase healthy nutrition, increase physical activity, and decrease sedentary living
- communicate practical steps that can be taken immediately for example healthier food at home and at school, walking and cycling to replace the car for short trips, and limiting the number of hours devoted to television and computer games
- provide advice about appropriate sources of help and information.

Within our community, there are also opportunities to increase understanding of the overweight and obesity issue among professionals who come into contact with children and their families. In addition to the health sector, there are other professionals that could play a role in preventing childhood obesity.



5. Increasing Community Understanding – Our Priority Actions

Objective	Action	How This Action Will Make A Difference	Related Summit Resolutions
To raise community awareness about overweight and obesity, nutrition and physical activity.	5.1 NSW Health will develop and implement a state-wide community education campaign using various forms of media and in coordination with activity arising from the National Obesity Task Force.*	5.1 A community wide education campaign would raise awareness and communicate key messages to the community. Greater community awareness about the health impacts of obesity and how to prevent it will assist parents, teachers and children and young people themselves, to make informed, healthy choices and where to go to get help.	1.11, 2.6, 2.14, 4.6
To increase community access to information and resources about overweight and obesity, nutrition and physical activity.	5.2 NSW Health will develop and maintain the overweight and obesity website: www.health.nsw.gov.au/obesity .	5.2 The web site provides accurate information on healthy weight, and an interactive Kids Food and Activity Guide so individualised nutrition and activity advice can be provided to children. It also provides information on appropriate referral agencies for parents, children and young people.	1.11, 5.4 (in part), 6.16, 6.18, 7.6, 8.6 (in part),
	5.3 NSW Health will publish an easy to use compendium of nutrition and physical activity related information and resources on NSW Health's Childhood Obesity Website.	5.3 The Compendium will provide community access to up to date, reliable and easy to use information and resources.	7.6
To increase the knowledge of parents, caregivers, coaches, community leaders and decision makers regarding physical activity and food skills for children.	5.4 The Department of Sport and Recreation and NSW Health will develop a user friendly, on-line training program providing information on physical fitness, nutrition and healthy lifestyle options for children.	5.4 The on-line training will provide key people in the community with a basic understanding of how to encourage physical activity and healthy eating as part of a balanced lifestyle for children. Users of the site will receive a 'certificate' if they reach a certain level in the training. The on-line training provided by the Department of Sport and Recreation will be linked to the overweight and obesity website, and promoted through key agencies.	2.6 (in part), 2.7 (in part), 2.11 (in part), 5.11

* The National Obesity Task Force is due to complete its report to Health Ministers in November 2003. Any community-wide education within NSW will be developed in the context of national community-wide education to ensure consistency of messaging and cost efficiency.

Priority 6

Increasing Our Knowledge

There is still much to be learnt about the issues of overweight and obesity in children. The current prevalence of overweight and obesity in NSW's children is unknown, with the most recent figures dating from 1997. Research into the causes of overweight and obesity is also needed, as this information will be critical in providing the evidence to underpin the design and implementation of programs to address the issue.



Government also needs to know whether the investments it is making in actions to prevent obesity are working. Programs and services need evaluation and monitoring to increase our knowledge about what works in preventing and treating overweight and obesity and to ensure that resources are directed to the actions that work.

NSW Health has previously committed funds for research facilities to investigate and monitor physical activity and nutrition. The Centre for Public Health Nutrition, a joint venture between NSW Health and Sydney University since 2000, aims to assist the public health nutrition workforce in NSW to utilise research evidence and principles of good management to plan, implement and evaluate population policies and programs. In 2002, the NSW Centre for Physical Activity and Health at the University of NSW was established. The Centre for Physical Activity and Health provides a centre of excellence for physical activity research, training, evaluation and advocacy in NSW.

Bringing fields of research together will enable even greater gains in understanding the prevention of overweight and obesity. In late 2002, the NSW Government announced the establishment of the Centre for Overweight and Obesity. The Centre for Overweight and Obesity will allow the consolidation of physical activity, nutrition, overweight and obesity and health promotion research groups in NSW to create a world class research team.

Also in 2002, NSW Health developed a partnership with the Australian Child and Adolescent Obesity Research Network, which aims to maximise the collective effectiveness of Australian child and adolescent obesity researchers through the sharing of resources and expertise.

6. Increasing Our Knowledge – Our Priority Actions

Objective	Action	How This Action Will Make A Difference	Related Summit Resolutions
To increase the overweight and obesity research capability within NSW.	<p>6.1 NSW Health will establish the NSW Centre for Overweight and Obesity. The Centre will draw together the extensive expertise of key researchers in NSW, including the Centre for Physical Activity and Health, Centre for Public Health Nutrition, Australian Centre for Health Promotion, NSW Centre for Research into Adolescent Health, Discipline of Paediatrics and Child Health, the University of Sydney at the Children's Hospital Westmead, and the Australian Child and Adolescent Obesity Research Network.</p>	<p>6.1 In monitoring overweight and obesity trends and evaluating services and programs for their effectiveness, the Centre for Overweight and Obesity will provide invaluable information to the Government and others about the best ways to prevent overweight and obesity and help us understand whether our efforts are being successful.</p>	1.12, 4.9, 7.13, 7.17, 8.4, 8.5
	<p>6.2 NSW efforts will be linked to national obesity research through the Australian Child and Adolescent Obesity Research Network (ACAORN).</p>	<p>6.2 ACAORN provides the mechanism through which Australian child and adolescent obesity researchers can maximise their collective effectiveness. ACAORN facilitates a more planned, systematic and coordinated approach to research in this area. The benefits for research capability in NSW are the increased access to shared resources, expertise and research findings in a timely manner.</p>	1.12 (in part), 7.17 (in part), 8.4, 8.5
To understand the prevalence of overweight and obesity in children and adolescents as well as fitness, physical activity, food habits, and environmental factors.	<p>6.3 Implementing the Schools Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey (SPANS). The preferred target group will include students in school years K, 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 (5-16 year olds) in all three education sectors, in both metropolitan and rural areas throughout NSW.</p>	<p>6.3 The most recent NSW state-wide data for the prevalence of overweight and obesity for children and young people was collected in 1997. The SPANS survey will update this data and identify trends in overweight and obesity and some of the important related behaviours and conditions.</p>	4.7, 4.8, 7.13

Objective	Action	How This Action Will Make A Difference	Related Summit Resolutions
Increase our understanding of factors that influence the complex behaviours of physical activity and food habits, and determine the impact of 'on-the-ground initiatives'.	<p>6.4 Conducting research into:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the determinants of physical activity and nutrition • the association between the environment and physical activity and nutrition behaviours • the effectiveness of initiatives to overcome childhood overweight and obesity and assessing the appropriateness of state-wide roll-out. 	<p>6.4 Increased knowledge about determinants of overweight and obesity will contribute to more informed policy directions. Further, appropriate evaluation will ensure that investment in overweight and obesity initiatives is cost-effective.</p>	<p>1.12, 2.17 (in part), 7.13, 7.18, 8.3</p>



Priority 7

Governments, Industry and the Community Working Together

The many factors that influence diet and physical activity patterns require a multifaceted response. Creating and maintaining partnerships that can support effective action to promote healthy eating and physical activity is fundamental to achieving change in childhood obesity rates.

An example of one such productive partnership is the Premier's Physical Activity Task Force, which has been a model of collaboration across government agencies, and between government, industry, non-government organisations and researchers. The Task Force model has been taken up by several other states and territories.

For the prevention of obesity in children and young people, there is a need to develop an even more cohesive approach between government, non government and industry bodies that builds on the progress to date, takes account of the respective strengths of each partner and fully utilises opportunities that may exist.

Key partnerships for development are likely to include:

- Partnerships between government agencies.
- Partnerships between government agencies and industry.
- Partnerships involving local councils.
- Partnerships involving non-government organisations and community groups in collaboration with governments and/or businesses.
- Partnerships between NSW and other states or the Commonwealth that may arise as a result of the work of the National Obesity Task Force.



7. Governments, Industry and the Community Working Together – Our Priority Actions

Objective	Action	How This Action Will Make A Difference	Related Summit Resolutions
To create and maintain partnerships that will result in better, more efficient and more sustainable approaches to tackle the causes of obesity.	7.1 The NSW Government will convene forums involving key stakeholder groups, to explore ways of working together to prevent childhood obesity.	7.1 Creating and maintaining strong partnerships with stakeholder groups will result in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger and more sustainable approaches to tackling the causes of childhood obesity. • Coordinated strategies that reduce duplication of effort and use resources more effectively and efficiently. • Respect for the roles and responsibilities of partners. • Cross fertilisation of ideas and expertise. • Improved opportunities to reach the community with important messages. 	1.14, 7.3, 8.5, 8.7



Notes



