



Your School

Our nation's health is in poor shape, even though we spend more on health services than any other country. In light of our failing health system, National Public Health Week (NPHW) 2009 raises awareness nationally and locally of public health's critical role in restoring and ensuring a healthy America.

We will do anything to protect our children, especially their health. Since they spend most of their days at school and around other children, it is important to understand how public health affects them. They, too, rely on public health so they can do *their* job—learning.

Think about how public health provides the foundation for healthy students and healthy schools. How can you use this information to ensure our children have healthier school programs?

Did you know...

- Over the past three decades, the childhood obesity rate has more than doubled for children aged 2–5 years and adolescents aged 12–19 years, while it has more than tripled for children aged 6–11 years.¹
- Although the average child gets less than 15 minutes of vigorous activity a day,² twenty percent of school districts report decreasing time for recess.³
- One out of two young people who start and continue to smoke will be killed by tobacco-related illness.⁴
- Only 33 states and the District of Columbia have requirements for vision screening in public or private schools.⁵
- The National School Lunch Program provided nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to more than 30.5 million children each school day in 2007.⁶

Take action...

- ✓ Let teachers, principals, administrators and school board members know that you value health education.
- ✓ Volunteer at your school to ensure a safe and healthy learning environment.
- ✓ Advocate for policy and programming changes, such as longer break times for students, and make sure they are enforced.
- ✓ Encourage your local schools to require physical education programs for grades K–12.
- ✓ Meet with your school PTA to discuss healthier cafeteria and vending machine options.
- ✓ Add your own activities, too!

¹ Institute of Medicine of the National Academies. Childhood Obesity in the United States: Facts and Figures. Washington, DC: 2004.

² Fitness for Youth. University of Michigan. Facts on Kids Health.

³ Center on Education Policy. Choices, changes, and challenges: Curriculum and instruction in the No Child Left Behind era. Washington DC: December 2007.

⁴ World Health Organization. School Health and Youth Health Promotion: Fact Sheet.

⁵ American Optometric Association. The need for comprehensive vision examination of preschool and school-age children. St. Louis: March 1997.

⁶ United States Department of Agriculture. Food and Nutrition Program National School Lunch Program Fact Sheet. Alexandria, VA: July 2008.