

# Taking a stance against obesity

**It is no secret that childhood obesity is a problem. In BC, over 200,000 children aged two to 17 years are obese or overweight.**

Researchers, health professionals, government officials, parents, and many others are asking—why? The short answer is: “it’s complex.” There are contributing factors that we cannot easily control (i.e. genetics) and others we can control (i.e. nutrition and physical activity). There are factors we don’t fully understand and many we may not have realized.

## **Taking an active stance**

What we do know however is that it is time to take action. We cannot allow the consequences of obesity such as type 2 diabetes, depression, and even cancer, permeate the lives of our children. We cannot accept that children today may live shorter lifespans than their parents and grandparents. The responsibil-



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ity however does not lie with one individual or one sector. Rather, an “all-of-society” approach is necessary to make a measurable impact. There is no question that parents need to be engaged but so do governments, mayors, city plan-

ners, health professionals and administrators, media outlets, private businesses, schools, and early childhood-, before- and after-school programs. An intensive and coordinated approach involving all sectors of a community is critical in achieving positive change.

## **The formula for success**

Where do we begin? Communities can stand behind a common message that clearly demonstrates how to live a healthier lifestyle. The “5-2-1-0 guideline” is a health message that is rooted in evidence and used all over the world to promote physical activity and healthier food choices among children and their families. The message is simple: “enjoy at least five vegetables and fruits per day; power down after no more than two hours of screen time a day; play actively for at least one hour each day; and choose healthy liquids—pick zero sugar sweetened beverages.” All sectors of BC

communities must promote this health message and take action to support children and their families in achieving the “5-2-1-0 guideline” every day. Doctors, teachers, daycare owners, grocery stores, and restaurants - we all have a role to play and the opportunities are endless.

Childhood obesity is a complex problem that requires a complex solution. Collective action across all sectors of the community is necessary to affect transformative change that is sustainable and long lasting. Let’s take on the challenge in our homes and in our communities. Let’s bring people together from all sectors of BC communities to change policy and alter social and physical environments so that the healthy choice is the easy choice for children.

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