



Obesity Testimony
Submitted by the Illinois Academy of Family Physicians
February 26, 2010

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The Illinois Academy of Family Physicians (IAFP) commends the Illinois Department of Public Health for holding these hearings within a month of two national actions:

1. First Lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" campaign to end childhood obesity
2. U.S. Prevention Services Task Force (USPSTF) updated screening recommendations for obesity in children and adolescents.

These national measures draw attention to an epidemic that affects up to 18% of children and adolescents ages 2-19 who are obese. Family physicians have adopted the USPSTF recommendations and joined with first lady Michelle Obama in her Let's Move campaign.

As a partner in the campaign, the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) will expand its Americans in Motion -- Health Initiatives program; its "Ready, Set, FIT!" school-based educational program; patient education materials on the www.FamilyDoctor.org Web site; and its Web-based tools and services for family physicians on the topic of obesity.

Family physicians see the impact of obesity firsthand as they help their obese patients face a lifetime of chronic conditions – including diabetes and high blood pressure. For the first time in our nation's history, U.S. children are at risk of dying at an earlier age than their parents. Many of these premature deaths will be tied to obesity and its complications. Fortunately, we can turn around the obesity trend.

Obesity prevention is multi-faceted and should include healthy eating and nutrition at home and in schools, physical fitness, and patient education in a medical practice. Family physicians should document patient weight and lifestyle factors, and then counsel all patients on nutrition, physical activity, and behavioral strategies to prevent excessive weight gain and treat the already obese.

Our Academy supports state and national efforts to improve nutrition and encourage physical activity for both children and adults. Long before state and national attention focused on obesity, family physicians recognized the risks and complications of obesity and created several programs to combat the disease. Americans in Motion - Healthy Interventions (AIM-HI). AIM-HI promotes fitness — physical activity, nutrition and emotional well-being — as the treatment of choice to prevent and manage many chronic conditions. This approach creates physician/patient relationships that lead to behavior change and results in better health.

Similarly, *Ready, Set, FIT!* is a school-based educational program, endorsed by the National School Board Association, that teaches third and fourth graders about the importance of fitness. *Ready, Set, FIT!* offers in-class lessons and take-home activities aimed at encouraging kids to be active, eat smart, and feel good.

To learn more about the resources available for family physicians and to see news articles and highlights concerning the USPSTF recommendations and First Lady Michelle Obama's campaign, "Let's Move" visit:

<http://www.aafp.org/online/en/home/policy/policies/o/obesityandoverweight.html>

We look forward to working with the Illinois Department of Public Health and its local affiliates to combat obesity and provide Illinoisans with the tools necessary to lead healthy, physically fit, and active lives.