



## **Executive Summary**

Maine, like the rest of the nation, has an epidemic of obesity. Data from 2002–2004 show the problem is pervasive from youth to adulthood. Over half of Maine adults (61%) are considered either overweight (38%) or obese (23%). Fifteen percent of Maine high school students are at risk for becoming overweight, a rate similar to national figures, and another 13% are considered overweight. Eighteen percent of Maine middle school students are at risk for becoming overweight and 13% are overweight. Similarly, 21% of Maine kindergarten students are at risk for becoming overweight and 15% are overweight. Overweight children are more likely to become overweight or obese adults and thus suffer from additional health conditions associated with obesity.

Nutrition and physical activity affect death and disability from many diseases and can impact the physical, mental, and emotional quality of life. Although there are many nutrition and physical activity issues in Maine, none are as compelling as the problems of excess weight gain and inadequate physical activity. Weight is a result of the balance or imbalance of how much food is consumed with how much energy is expended. Individual food choices greatly influence a person's weight gain and overall health. High-calorie, high-fat foods are convenient and readily available outside the home from restaurants, fast-food establishments, schools, vending machines, and other food service outlets—environments that do not encourage healthy choices. In addition, today's society enjoys technological advances that have reduced the need for daily physical activity and increased the time spent in sedentary endeavors.

An estimated 112,000 deaths per year are attributable to obesity among U.S. adults. In Maine, an estimated four people die every day from an underlying cause of poor nutrition or physical inactivity. Obesity is the number-two killer, after tobacco, in total number of deaths due to preventable causes. Obesity also creates a heavy economic burden. Obese people generally have higher health care costs and face greater health risks, and the rates of overweight and obesity are higher among Maine's disabled population. Not only can obesity result in disability, but disability can also be a factor in developing obesity.

Improving nutrition, increasing physical activity, and, in particular, reversing the trend toward overweight and obesity are issues that require broad, long-term solutions. The responsibility for improving the health of Maine citizens lies with individuals, local communities, and the State as a whole. It is time to address the policy and environmental factors impacting food and physical activity choices that can support Maine people in their efforts to become healthier.

This Plan serves as a guiding document for public health leaders, health care providers, educators, policy makers, and citizens to promote healthy eating and

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regular physical activity and improve health and the quality of life in Maine. Implementation of the Plan will require collaboration among all nutrition and physical activity programs and organizations. Maine engaged stakeholders to create this Plan and must rely on these State and local partners to bring the Plan to life by taking responsibility for implementing the strategies.

The Plan's objectives and strategies place emphasis on addressing the problem of obesity among youth and adult populations. The Plan distinguishes between objectives that address youth (all individuals age 18 and under) and those that address adults. Objectives to promote breastfeeding, which reduces the risk of childhood obesity, also have prominence. Because this Plan is for *all* Maine populations, it also includes objectives and strategies for food safety, food security, and eating disorders. Information regarding Maine populations who experience health disparities is included in the section on Profile of Maine beginning on page 17 and on page 41 in the section on Selected Populations.

**The overarching nutrition and physical activity goal for Maine is to:**

***Increase the proportion of Maine people who are at a healthy weight and reduce the health risks associated with overweight and obesity, especially among populations who experience health disparities.***

The Plan identifies long-term objectives designed to impact health status; intermediate objectives designed to impact behaviors; and short-term objectives designed to impact changes in knowledge, awareness, attitudes, the environment, or policies. Corresponding key strategies are specific and are designed to result in community and State policy and environmental changes to support healthy behaviors. Objectives that address the reduction and prevention of overweight and obesity have a corresponding evaluation plan.

Acronyms used throughout the Plan are identified in Appendix A. The Maine Physical Activity and Nutrition (PAN) Plan will be reviewed annually by Maine Health and Human Services' Public Health's Physical Activity and Nutrition Program (PANP) and updated as appropriate. The Plan is available on the Maine HHS Public Health Web site at [www.maine.gov/dhhs/boh](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/boh).

Figure 1 outlines eight focus areas of the Plan, with the long-term objectives identified with bullets and intermediate objectives identified with arrows.

**Figure 1: The Maine PAN Plan Areas of Focus**

- Reduce the proportion of youth who are at risk for overweight or who are overweight.
- Reduce the proportion of adults who are overweight or obese.

1. Physical Activity

- ➔ Increase the proportion of youth who engage in vigorous physical activity that promotes cardio-respiratory fitness.
- ➔ Increase the proportion of adults who engage in leisure-time physical activity.

2. Consumption of Fruits and Vegetables

- ➔ Increase the proportion of youth who consume five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day.
- ➔ Increase the proportion of adults who consume five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day.

3. Caloric Imbalance and Expenditure

- ➔ Decrease sugar-sweetened beverage consumption among Maine youth.
- ➔ Increase consumption of milk that is 1% fat or less among Maine youth.
- ➔ Decrease adult consumption of energy-dense food choices from menus.

4. Television Time

- ➔ Increase the proportion of youth who view television two or fewer hours a day.

5. Breastfeeding

- ➔ Increase the proportion of mothers who are breastfeeding their babies at six months.

6. Food Safety

- Reduce the number of food-borne illnesses caused by improper food handling.
  - ➔ Increase the proportion of consumers who follow food safety practices.

7. Food Security

- Increase the proportion of Maine people who have enough food for an active, healthy life.
  - ➔ Increase the proportion of households in Maine that are food secure.

8. Eating Disorders

- Reduce the proportion of Maine people who use weight loss strategies that endanger their health.
  - ➔ Reduce the number of people with eating disorders, including anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa.

• = Long-term objectives      ➔ = Intermediate objectives