

# INVESTING IN PREVENTION

## A MESSAGING GUIDE



Childhood Obesity Intervention  
Cost-Effectiveness Study

*The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the importance of prevention and prioritizing public health efforts that can ensure a healthier future for everyone. The purpose of this messaging guide is to help you communicate about keeping the focus on prevention and making responsible and equitable investments in policies and programs, particularly those focused on healthy eating and active living.*

## THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

- The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of prevention. Vaccination,<sup>1</sup> mask-wearing,<sup>2</sup> social distancing,<sup>3</sup> and handwashing<sup>4</sup> are all key prevention strategies to limit the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.
- As state and local health departments strive to foster greater resiliency in local communities, making smart investments in preventive strategies that promote greater health equity matters more than ever.
- Cost-effectiveness analysis is a powerful tool that can assess which strategies will offer the best value for the money invested and can provide economic justification for investing appropriately. These data points can inform strategic decision-making.
- Investing in efforts to promote healthy eating and active living can help prevent chronic disease and avoid costly health and economic challenges related to poorer health outcomes in the years to come.
- Structural racism has contributed to economic disadvantages, healthcare inequities, and lack of access to healthy foods and beverages, resulting in higher rates of obesity and obesity-related diseases among communities of color – including Black, Latinx, and Native American populations.<sup>5</sup>
- Incorporating cost-effectiveness analysis methods and focusing on health equity when choosing strategies to promote healthy eating and active living can help reduce obesity and obesity-related disparities. [CHOICES Project research](#) documents strategies that are projected to improve overall population health and improve health equity. These strategies should be high on the list of priority actions for state/local governments.

### Examples of Strategies that Can Improve Overall Population Health & Improve Health Equity

- [Excise tax on sugary drinks in California](#)
- [Incorporating screen time counseling into the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children \(WIC\) in Oklahoma](#)
- [Electronic decision support for pediatric medical providers in Denver, Colorado](#)

### CHOICES Tools & Resources

- [CHOICES Childhood Obesity National Action Kit](#)
- [CHOICES Community of Practice](#)
- [CHOICES Research](#)

### Additional Tools & Resources

- [FrameWorks Guidance: Framing COVID-19](#)
- [Voices for Healthy Kids: Resource Library](#)

# SAMPLE MESSAGING

## An Epidemic of Inactivity & Poor Nutrition

- Making sure kids are growing up with opportunities to be active and eat healthy from their very first days is one of the critical ways to ensure that they have a healthy weight when they reach adulthood.
- Most kids entering adolescence with obesity will still have obesity as adults. Focusing on healthy eating and moving more from an early age are essential prevention strategies.

## A Range of Strategies

- Everyone – especially children – should have opportunities to eat healthy and be physically active.
- We must implement a range of strategies within multiple settings – schools, early education and care, health care, and the broader community – if we expect to slow the rise in child and adult obesity and lessen the burden on health and health care costs. No single strategy will be enough.

## Prevention Works

- There are a number of strategies that have strong scientific evidence that they will benefit health: these include strategies targeted at increasing physical activity, decreasing sugary drink consumption, and improving diet quality.
- Some of these strategies are even cost-saving, meaning they save more in future health care costs than they cost to put into place.<sup>6</sup>

## Improving Health Equity

- The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the significant inequities seen throughout the United States among populations defined by race, ethnicity, and income.
- Prevention strategies with strong evidence for a cost-effective impact on health and that promote greater health equity are needed to meaningfully address the disproportionate impact that chronic disease and obesity have on low-income populations and communities of color.

## SUGGESTED CITATION

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## Why Promoting Healthy Weight Matters

- If we don't act now, more than half of today's kids will have obesity when they are adults.<sup>7</sup> Half of the adult U.S. population will have obesity and a quarter will have severe obesity by 2030.<sup>8</sup>
- These increases are accompanied by growing inequities by race/ethnicity, geography, and income.<sup>9</sup>
- Obesity increases risks for diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer.
- Kids with obesity incur an extra \$120 in medical costs each year; adults with obesity incur an extra \$1,900 in medical costs each year.<sup>9</sup>

## References

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