

Salud America!

The RWJF Research Network to
Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children

Volume 2, Issue 3, Winter, 2009-2010

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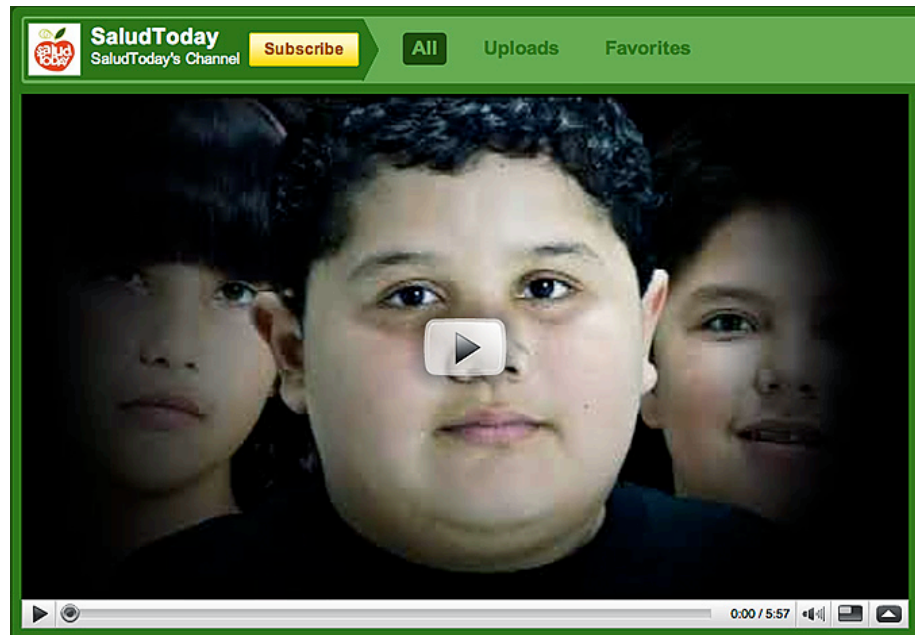
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Got a News Item?

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items, story ideas and
suggestions. Please e-mail
despres@uthscsa.edu to be
featured in the E-newsletter.

Salud America! leaders unveil Web site, blog to improve Latino health



Watch the new video by *Salud America!* on Latino childhood obesity on SaludToday's YouTube page.

The leadership team behind *Salud America!* recently unveiled a new Latino health Web site and blog, SaludToday, to promote healthier lifestyles among Latinos.

The new site, found at www.SaludToday.com, features a [blog](#) with the latest news, research and real-life stories about Latino cancer, obesity and other health topics, as well as videos, resources and the capability for people to share the stories of their own successes in leading healthier lives.

Follow SaludToday on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).

For example, you can go to YouTube to



view the popular *Salud America!* video that dramatically frames the issue of Latino childhood obesity.

You can also check out six new public service announcements (PSAs) in English and Spanish. The culturally relevant PSAs show the benefits of preventative screening for breast, cervical and colorectal cancer among Latinos. The PSAs were produced through *Redes En Acción*: The National Latino Cancer Research Network, an NCI-funded initiative to combat cancer among Latinos. *Redes* is led by the leaders of *Salud America!*

Continued on page 8 ►



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Salud America! The RWJF Research Network to Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The program aims to unite and increase the number of Latino scientists engaged in research on childhood obesity among Latinos to seek environmental and policy solutions to the epidemic. The network is directed by the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio. For more information, visit www.salud-america.org. The *Salud America!* E-newsletter is distributed quarterly to its national membership network.

Director's Corner

Letter to members from Dr. Amelie Ramirez

Since starting *Salud America!* in late 2007, we've worked to increase awareness about Latino childhood obesity among researchers, policy-makers and community leaders.

I have sounded the horn at dozens of meetings in the past two years.

Most recently, I [spoke](#) about Latino childhood obesity challenges and potential policy solutions at the American Public Health Association's 137th Annual Meeting in November 2009 in Philadelphia.

I also spread the word through the webinar [series](#) "Let's End the Childhood Obesity Epidemic," hosted by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Center to Prevent Childhood Obesity. I also was a respondent at the Southern Obesity Summit in Austin, Texas, and spoke about Latino childhood obesity as the keynote speaker at a National Hispanic Heritage Month event in Rockville, Md., in October 2009.

Meanwhile, we continue to keep you updated on the



Ramirez

latest Latino childhood obesity news and research in our E-alerts and E-newsletters.

In addition to helping more people learn about the challenges Latino children face in leading healthier lives, *Salud America!* has focused on building the field of Latino researchers to find solutions. Our 20 pilot projects are busy working in Latino communities to make positive changes. Please check out our new Grantee Corner on Pages 4 and 5 to learn more about the pilot researchers and their work.

We hope we continue to inspire you to take a closer look at Latino childhood obesity and contribute to reversing this alarming epidemic.

As always, please be sure to frequently check our [Web site](#) for updates on our and [others'](#) efforts to address Latino childhood obesity.

Amelie G. Ramirez, Dr.P.H.

Director, *Salud America!*

Director, Institute for Health Promotion Research at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio



News Briefs

Salud America! membership number rises

The number of *Salud America!* members has grown to 1,525 as of December 2009, up from 1,280 in December 2008 and 785 in July 2008. We are gaining new members every day, and we urge you to invite colleagues to join, as well as others you may know who are interested in addressing the problem of obesity among Latino children. Join the network by clicking [here](#).

Summit Report details efforts to reverse Latino child obesity

Have you heard what the nation's leaders and researchers said to address Latino childhood obesity at our Inaugural *Salud America!* Scientific Summit? If not, be sure to check out our Summit [Report](#) to find out the details from the summit, held September 9-11, 2009 in San Antonio, Texas. Dr. Richard H. Carmona, 17th Surgeon General of the U.S., was our keynote speaker. Watch his speech [here](#). Other special guests were: Sean Elliott, a former San Antonio Spur (at right); his wife Claudia Zapata, a *San Antonio Express-News* health columnist; and a message from champion cyclist Lance Armstrong.



Funding Opportunities

Improving Diet and Physical Activity Assessments

Several National Institutes of Health (NIH) agencies are seeking [applications](#) for grants to support research to enhance the quality of measurements of dietary intake and physical activity. Applications may include development of assessment tools for culturally diverse populations and more. Letters of intent are due May 5, 2010.

NIH Grants

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) compiles a wide variety of obesity-related research funding [opportunities](#) that are currently seeking applications.

Stepping Up Against Latino Childhood Obesity

Latina mother strives to improve health of her kids, community

Unhappy with unhealthy menu items at restaurants near her San Diego home, Xinia Sanchez called and visited eateries to ask chefs and owners to serve healthier food.

Many slammed the door in her face.

But the mother of two teens was surprised when some listened—and added healthier food choices, like fruit cups, whole-wheat sandwiches, lean turkey and low-fat options.

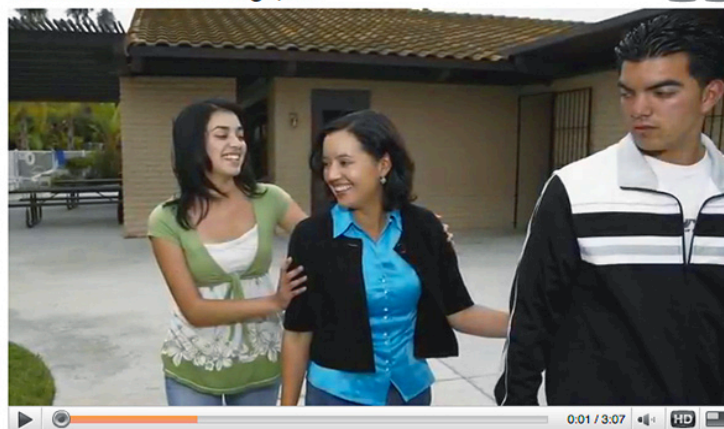
“Mothers need to ask for what they need for their children,” Sanchez said. “It doesn’t hurt to have your voice heard. It can help everyone if you speak up.”

Xinia Sanchez’ **story** is just one of many mothers, including several Latinas, featured in the new *Be Well Book* from the Alliance for a Healthier Generation.

The book showcases moms working to establish life-long, healthy habits in their kids with the hope that their stories will inspire other parents. It is available free [online](#).

Sanchez, who has a daughter, 19, and son, 17, believes that what goes on a child’s plate should look like a rainbow. Colorful, natural foods are usually free from artificial

Be Well: Xinia - San Diego, CA



Watch the video of Xinia Sanchez’ story, part of the new *Be Well Book* that showcases mothers who help make their families healthier.

ingredients and packed with vitamins and nutrients.

She also found substitutes for her favorite Latino recipes—like vegetarian quesadillas with whole wheat tortillas, onions, red pepper, corn and veggies.

Sanchez also instructs her kids to exercise for at least an hour a day.

And she brings these healthy messages to the community, too, working with a university and health agency to do seminars on nutrition, exercise, and healthy living.

“I can’t think of a better gift to give your children than strong bodies and minds,” she said.

Salud America! NAC

Elva Arredondo
Marice Ashe
Laura Brennan
Nancy Butte
Anna Diez-Roux
Robert Garcia
Lawrence Green

► Robin Hamre

Terry Huang
Barbara Israel
Laura Kettel Khan
Judith Ottoson
Frank Penedo
Charlotte Pratt
Maya Rockey Moore
James Sallis
Randy Schwartz
Mary Story
Elsie Taveras
Mildred Thompson
Amy Lazarus Yaroch

Meet the National Advisory Committee

As a registered dietitian in Iowa in the 1990s, Robin Hamre was alarmed by how she was seeing chronic diseases that were once found only in adults, such as type 2 diabetes and hypertension, in more and more children.

“I decided I needed to do more than work with one person at a time. I knew we had to change the system to prevent obesity,” Hamre said.

To change the system, Hamre joined the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as a health scientist in 1999 and is now a public health analyst who develops and cultivates partnerships across the nation to prevent obesity and other chronic diseases.

Much of her work at the CDC

has had a system-level impact. For example, she led a nutrition and physical activity program that provided states with \$16 million per year for training on weight management and social marketing; workshops on nutrition, activity and obesity program development; and program sustainability.

She also co-led a study on the benefits of a national practice-based research network of clinicians to prevent childhood obesity.

In her current role with the CDC’s Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity, Hamre examines the political,



Robin Hamre

economic and public health environments to spur collaborative efforts to prevent obesity.

She also wants more Latino researchers, members of the media and families to work together to

increase healthy environments and healthy lifestyles.

“Spanish-language media may want to partner with public health to improve the choices Latino families make,” Hamre said. “I also would like to see Latino children more involved in the change they want to see for their families—access to healthy food, pricing policies for food and more safe places to play.”

Grantee Corner

Meet *Salud America!* Grantee Myriam Torres



Myriam Torres

Myriam Torres, a South Carolina researcher who has a strong record of improving minority health, knows the critical situation of Latino health in her state.

South Carolina's Latino population surged 342 percent from 1990 to 2005.

Most Latinos here have spent less than eight years in the U.S. and many aren't English proficient and are uninsured.

More than 17 percent of Latino children here are obese, compared to less than 12 percent of whites, and they don't meet physical activity recommendations.

These factors make obesity prevention a top priority, Torres said.

And that's why, thanks to *Salud America!* pilot funding, Torres and her colleagues created *Juntas Podemos* (Together We Can), in which Latina mothers will photograph the neighborhoods their children live in, in order to convince civic leaders to make healthier environments in West Columbia, S.C.

"As a Latina, I cannot have peace seeing all the needs around me and doing nothing, so we thought about effective ways to help prevent the obesity epidemic among children," said Torres, a clinical assistant professor of epidemiology at the University of South Carolina. "We thought that empowering the mothers is the best way to attack any problem."

Torres is one of 20 pilot researchers funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation through *Salud America!* for \$75,000 over two years.

Torres' pilot project, *Juntas Podemos*, began in July 2009.

Juntas Podemos will:

- set up an advisory group of mothers, researchers and city/school officials;
- give mothers cameras to document children's play and barriers to play;
- interview school officials about children's play behaviors;
- analyze results in focus groups; and
- present the findings and recommend policies to city/school officials.



Dr. Torres' research project, *Juntas Podemos*, will use Photovoice, a strategy that combines photography with grassroots action to reduce obesity among Latino children in South Carolina.

"We believe Latina mothers will generate policy recommendations about opportunities for physical activity for children," Torres said.

Torres sees her project as a new part of her already vast experience trying to improve the health of Latinos in South Carolina.

As a PhD student at the University of South Carolina, she first got involved in Latino issues by helping on a Latino-focused research grant led by her mentor, Caroline Macera.

Today she directs the University of South Carolina's Consortium for Latino Immigration Studies. The consortium, created in 2004, promotes and coordinates interdisciplinary and transnational research on the experiences of Latinos in South Carolina and the Southeast.

Her research has included: a statewide Latino health needs assessment; a study on the use of preventive health services among different Latino populations; a perinatal HIV prevention program for Latinas; a study on the economic impact of Latinos on South Carolina; and a study looking at the effects of the economic recession and South Carolina's 2008 immigration law on Mexicans living in the state.

She is a member of many local, regional and state Latino community groups, and often brings her research findings to these venues. She also provides cultural competency training where needed.

And now Torres hopes *Juntas Podemos* can reduce Latino childhood obesity rates.

"We think our project will empower Latino families," she said, "and help them think about childhood obesity and develop solutions that can work for them."

View a slideshow of Dr. Torres' project

Latinos in South Carolina

- South Carolina's Latino population is one of the fastest growing in the nation.
 - 342% increase between 1990 and 2005
- The national growth rate is 90%.



Grantee Corner

Meet *Salud America!* Grantee Robert Dudley



Robert Dudley

As early as high school, Robert Dudley wanted to be a scientist—white coat, goggles, test tubes, the whole lab experience.

He even started working at a blood lab during college.

But the lab's educational director got Dudley involved in helping local high-school teachers learn about immunology and design projects for their classes.

"The experience gave me a love for education and the effect that science can have at the human level that moved me to go into medicine," said Dudley, who got his medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania and now is a pediatrician at the Community Health Center, Inc., a nonprofit that provides affordable health care in Connecticut.

Today Dudley is still using science to help people for his new *Salud America!*-supported pilot project, an evaluation of his center's Healthy Tomorrows for Teens (HTT) program and its ability to help teen girls at Connecticut's largest high school, New Britain. More than half of New Britain students are Latino.

HTT is an existing program that encourages healthy lifestyles among New Britain girls with nutrition counseling, YWCA fitness programs and community service projects.

But so far, Latinas haven't consistently participated in HTT.

So Dudley's pilot project, one of 20 funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation through *Salud America!* for \$75,000 over two years, aims to evaluate HTT's strengths and weaknesses to spawn new knowledge of what spurs participation by Latinas and improve the program's ability to engage Latina teens in healthy lifestyles.

"We want to understand and overcome barriers to consistent engagement by Latina teens," said Dudley.

In a recent survey of New Britain ninth-graders, Latinas were more likely to be obese and dissatisfied with their weight than their white or black counterparts. Latinas also were the least likely to be physically active.



Dr. Dudley's project will use Photovoice to research Latino children's activity and eating habits. Pictured is a group of Connecticut Latinas who made photo storyboards and presented them to officials.

More than half of Latinas at the school fail P.E. class, compared to 19 percent of whites.

"The magnitude of the obesity epidemic has really pushed us to target at-risk children and come up with innovative interventions," Dudley said.

Dudley's pilot project will conduct:

- Focus group/interviews/Photovoice with five Puerto Rican teen girls
- Five focus groups with at least 35 Latino parents
- Five focus groups with at least 35 Latina teens, three with HTT participants and two with non-HTT participants
- Exit interviews with at least four long-term HTT participants

Dudley hopes the results will improve and sustain the existing HTT program, make P.E. more acceptable to Latinas and help the school engage girls in other activities that may help address school P.E. failure and high pregnancy rates.

It will also help the Spanish Speaking Center in downtown New Britain better serve low-income Latinos, as well as help the local YWCA target its services to Latinas.

"We want these organizations to have the information needed to work together to improve services that help Latina teens live health lifestyles," Dudley said.

View a slideshow of Dr. Dudley's project

Healthy Tomorrows for Teens
A Mid-course Evaluation

Robert Dudley MD, MEd, FAAP
Community Health Center, Inc
New Britain, CT

Research

OMG! IHPR/GirlScouts txtng 2 get Latina grls 2 xrciz

Through teen-friendly text messaging and Girl Scouts, the new “Physical Activity Partnership for Girls” aims to increase fitness among Latina girls in San Antonio, Texas.

The partnership, led by the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) teams local universities with community groups to try to boost activity and reduce sedentary behaviors among Latinas ages 11-14 through text messaging, Girl Scout troop activities and community outreach.

“We think using ‘kid-popular’ technology and the partnership of academics, community leaders and Girl Scouts will help Latina girls, who have higher obesity rates than other youths, be more active,” said IHPR researcher Dr. Deborah Parra-Medina, who directs the partnership, funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

Partners include:

- The IHPR at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio
- UTSA (Health & Kinesiology, Electrical & Computer Engineering)
- Girl Scouts of Southwest Texas
- The Edgewood Family Network in San Antonio

These agencies will work together to understand what impacts Latina girls’ activity through parent focus groups, in-depth interviews and media surveys.



From the Southwestern University's Megaphone Online



Girl Scouts also will create photo essays and maps of their activity environment.

Project partners then will design a culturally competent intervention to inspire Latina girls to participate in an hour of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity a day and reduce sedentary activities.

Girl Scout troops will be randomized into regular programming or the new intervention, which will deliver health messages through cell phone texts, troop leaders and outreach.

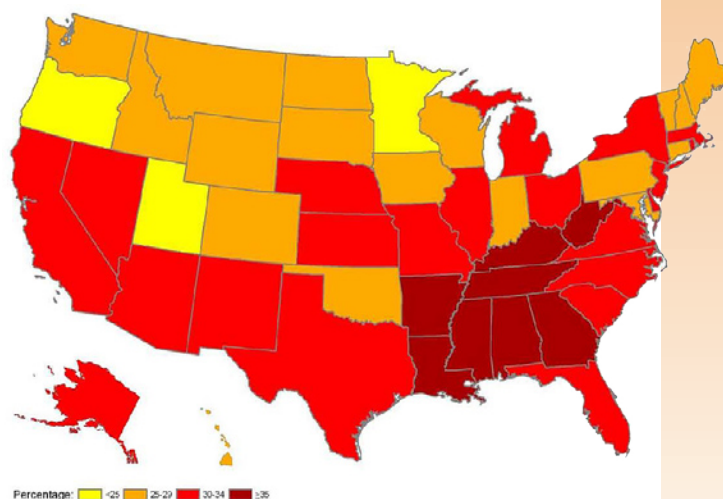
“We think this technology-savvy, collaborative project can boost activity, enjoyment of activity and cardiorespiratory fitness among local Latina girls,” said Dr. Parra-Medina. “If it does, this program can be used by Girl Scouts across the nation.”



Research Briefs

Report: Childhood obesity rates higher in Southern U.S.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Center to Prevent Childhood Obesity has released a [fact sheet](#) on Southern obesity that shows disproportionately higher rates of childhood obesity here compared to the rest of the U.S. The eight states with the highest percentages of overweight or obese children are all in the South. In every Southern state except Oklahoma, at least 30 percent of children are overweight or obese. Income, race and ethnicity, and education are part of the problem. At all income levels, African-American and Latino children were in worse health than whites. White boys born in 2000 have a 27 percent risk of being diagnosed with diabetes during their lifetimes, while African-American and Latino boys have a 40 and 45 percent lifetime risk, respectively.



Percentages of Overweight or Obese Youth Aged 10–17 Years in 2007

Policy and Built Environment Corner

Lessons learned: Increasing physical activity in special populations

The Active Living by Design program, community action model and lessons learned from 15 grantee communities are featured in a supplement of the December 2009 edition of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

The practice-based special issue describes community partnerships representing a range of lead agencies with emphasis on increasing physical activity in special populations, including children and Latinos.

There are examples of the process of planning and implementing comprehensive approaches to increase community levels of physical activity, including how to engage partners, secure resources, increase community participation, design policy and environment interventions, increase political or community support, address challenges or minimize barriers, and keep the momentum going over time.

One of the supplement's articles features the success of the Active Living by Design

Square, an urban Chicago community of 84,466 residents, mostly Latinos.

Through the Active Living by Design initiative, the Logan Square Neighborhood Association leveraged its 48 years of existence in the neighborhood to create opportunities and build partnerships.



The partnership successfully piloted Open Streets (temporary street closures) and advocated for development of the Bloomingdale Trail, an elevated rails-to-trails project. In schools, the partnership changed the culture at McAuliffe Elementary to support healthy behaviors through new policies, physical projects and programs.

Also featured are commentary on establishing best practices for changing the built environment to promote physical activity and **implications** for state and local officials.

Policy & Built Environment News Briefs

RWJF Center highlights federal policy issues

The RWJF Center to Prevent Childhood Obesity sends weekly email updates on policy and legislative issues and federal agency news. To learn more about the Center, visit its [Web site](#). Click on "Stay Informed" to sign up for the email updates.

RWJF Center highlights key local strategies to address childhood obesity

The RWJF Center to Prevent Childhood Obesity has also produced a [document](#) that highlights the leading policies, from the Institute of Medicine, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Leadership for Healthy Communities, that are most likely to change the local

landscape to enable our children to achieve a healthy lifestyle and enable communities to reverse the obesity epidemic.

Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities expands to 41 communities

In an effort to spur action at the local level to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic, the RWJF is expanding a landmark national program to create communities where children and their families have access to healthy, affordable foods and safe places to play and exercise. Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities—one of the Foundation's largest and most ambitious community-action [initiatives](#) ever—is a cornerstone of RWJF's \$500 million commitment in childhood obesity prevention. A total of 50 sites are being funded

through this program to craft innovative solutions aimed at helping children and families lead healthier lives. One of the [sites](#) working to prevent childhood obesity is in San Antonio, Texas.

An annotated resource book for built environment and physical activity

The annotated resource [book](#) for Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities includes a variety of resources for communities working on physical activity and the built environment. The guide is organized by different topic areas, some of which include: youth engagement, safety and crime, and land use and transportation. It also includes action tools and a list of organizations working to build the connection between physical activity and the built environment.

New Latino health web site, blog

► Continued from page 1

The new site also features the latest resources on health. For example, visitors can find out how to get local or national cancer information in Spanish, find out the best steps to take to quit using tobacco, or find a cancer clinical trial near them.

In all, the new site, blog and social network connections aim to catalyze Latino families, community leaders and health researchers to reduce and prevent health disparities.

“By bringing Latinos the latest stories, news and events regarding Latino health through a blog and social media and encouraging them to contribute their own insight and stories, we hope we can make huge leaps in improving Latino health,” said Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez, director of *Salud America!* and the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, which developed SaludToday.

About the E-newsletter

This E-newsletter is produced quarterly by *Salud America!* Please send news items or story ideas to despres@uthscsa.edu.

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Salud America! The RWJF Research Network to Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children

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Salud America! is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The program aims to unite and increase the number of Latino scientists engaged in research on childhood obesity among Latinos to seek environmental and policy solutions to the epidemic. The network is directed by the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio. For more information, [click here](#). To learn more about the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's efforts to combat childhood obesity, [click here](#).

Kids' Health Q&A

Question: Many adults are setting New Year's resolutions to get fit. But when it comes to kids, how much physical activity do they need?

Children and adolescents should do **1 hour or more** of physical activity each day, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

This may sound like a lot, but many children already meet the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. If they aren't meeting recommendations, encourage your child to participate in activities that are age-appropriate, enjoyable and offer variety.

Just make sure your child or adolescent is doing three types of physical activity:

Aerobic activity should

make up most of your child's 60 or more minutes of physical activity each day. This can include either moderate-intensity or vigorous-intensity activity. Be sure to include vigorous-intensity aerobic activity on at least three days a week.

Include muscle-strengthening activities, such as gymnastics or push-ups, at least three days a week as part of your child's 60 or more minutes.

Include bone-strengthening activities, such as jumping rope or running, at least 3 days a week as part of your child's 60 or more minutes.

To find out exactly what counts as aerobic-, muscle- and bone-strengthening activities for kids, click [here](#).