

A young boy with short dark hair, wearing a blue and white plaid button-down shirt, is focused on pouring peanuts from a clear plastic container into a white bowl. He is holding a clear plastic spoon in his right hand. The background is plain white.

# Healthy and Active Before 5:

Action Plan to Reduce  
Childhood Obesity  
in Contra Costa County

## Executive Summary

January 2008

# Tackling the Obesity Epidemic

Good nutrition and regular physical activity are fundamental to promoting healthy growth and development in young children. Establishing healthy habits early helps prevent chronic disease in future years. In addition to the influential role of parents, families and key care providers, there is increasing evidence that the characteristics of the physical environment—from the presence of parks to the availability of healthy foods in neighborhood stores—is directly linked to eating and activity behavior.

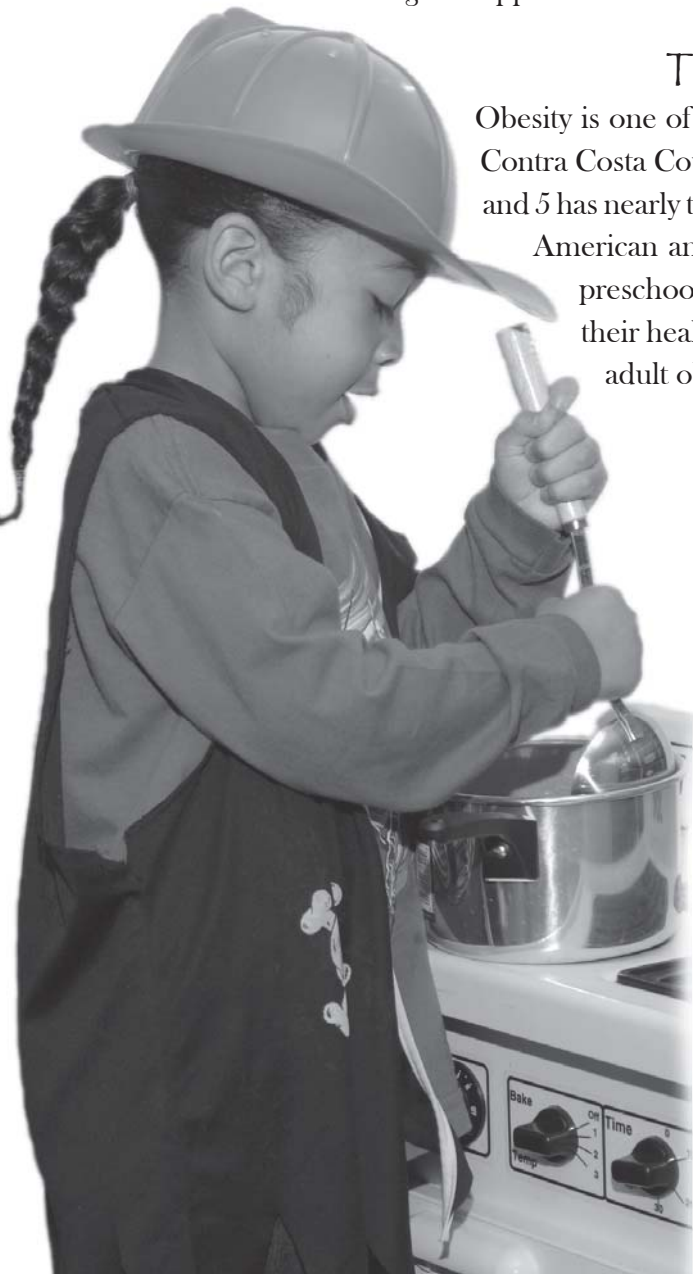
To help ensure all Contra Costa County children get a healthy start in life, Families CAN, Kaiser Permanente, Contra Costa Health Services, First Five Contra Costa and the Contra Costa Child Care Council have formed Healthy and Active Before 5 - a countywide collaborative effort to address early childhood obesity. Prevention Institute provided technical and staff support for the planning process. The goal of Healthy and Active Before 5 is to create a healthier Contra Costa by increasing options for healthy eating and active living in our county by focusing on supportive environments and positive parenting.

## The Challenge in Contra Costa

Obesity is one of the consequences of poor eating and activity environments. In Contra Costa County, the incidence of obesity for children between the ages of 2 and 5 has nearly tripled, affecting nearly one in five children. Low income, African American and Hispanic children and youth are most affected. Overweight preschoolers are five times more likely to be overweight at age 12 than their healthy weight peers. Childhood overweight is a strong predictor for adult obesity and related risks like diabetes and hypertension.

"2006 data on the incidence of childhood obesity shows that 33.3% of Contra Costa's low income children aged 2 - 5 years are either overweight or obese. We anticipate record high rates of adult obesity, diabetes, hypertension and early death from heart disease unless we can change the environment in which kids grow up."

- Dr. Diane Dooley



## Making a Difference

While personal behavior is a factor, Healthy and Active Before 5 understands the need to take a comprehensive approach - one that addresses the various forces influencing what our children eat and the physical activity opportunities they enjoy. Our goal is to create food and activity environments in Contra Costa's neighborhoods and children's institutions that motivate and support children and families to adopt healthier behaviors. The eight principles focus on ensuring that families and care providers for children five and under have the information they need to make healthy eating and physical activity decisions. They also emphasize the importance of making changes within our community to make the healthy choice the easy choice.

Help us build a  
Healthy Future  
for Contra Costa's  
Children!



# Principles and Strategies to Support the Reduction of Childhood Obesity among Children 0-5 in Contra Costa County

## Principle 1:

Support and promote breastfeeding and the use of breastmilk as the normal way to feed infants, for at least the first year of life

## Principle 2:

Increase the availability, accessibility and demand for affordable, healthy foods in all neighborhoods

## Principle 3:

Increase the availability and utilization of safe places to play and be physically active for all young children and their families

## Principle 4:

Improve the food and physical activity environment in preschool and childcare settings by offering high quality nutritious foods and opportunities for physical activity and play

## Principle 5:

Support the elimination of and reduce the exposure to marketing of foods of low nutritional value to children

## Principle 6:

Encourage the reduction of TV and other screen time for children 0-5

## Principle 7:

Assure that families and young children receive quality preventive care through pregnancy and early childhood

## Principle 8:

Ensure that key community sectors provide parents and other care providers with the information and support they need to make healthy eating and activity choices for their children



*For more information, visit us at [healthyandactivebefore5.org](http://healthyandactivebefore5.org) or email us at [healthyandactivebefore5@yahoo.com](mailto:healthyandactivebefore5@yahoo.com).*