New Research Briefs Examine Obesity Epidemic Among Latino Youths

Three national briefs analyze factors contributing to Latino childhood obesity, recommend policies to help prevent it; 20 grantee briefs offer potential solutions

SAN ANTONIO (December 2011) – Salud America!, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) based at the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, has released a comprehensive collection of research briefs examining the obesity epidemic among Latino children and teens.

Three new national briefs review current evidence with respect to Latino youth in three major areas: the availability of healthy, affordable foods; opportunities for physical activity; and the impact of food marketing on diets and potentially even obesity rates.

These briefs also provide policy recommendations, including:

- Efforts to bring healthy foods into neighborhoods and schools should particularly focus on Latino communities, since they are disproportionately affected by the epidemic.
- Policies that can help people be physically active in their neighborhoods should emphasize Latino populations because they are more likely to live in areas that do not support such activity.
- Efforts to reduce exposure to unhealthy food and beverage marketing should consider that Latino youth are particularly targeted by advertisers.
- Health programs and messages should be culturally sensitive, relevant for all populations and produced in both English and Spanish.

In addition to these three briefs, 20 pilot grantees funded by RWJF through Salud America! have produced briefs highlighting their own, new research. These briefs analyze a wide range of issues, from the impact of menu labeling in small restaurants in south Los Angeles, to how after-school programs can help Latino youth be active, to how community gardens can help lower-income Latino families eat more fruits and vegetables.

“These briefs provide a snapshot of the state of the Latino childhood obesity epidemic and describe how leaders and policymakers can more effectively address it,” said Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez, director of Salud America!, a national network of researchers, community leaders and policymakers who are working together to increase the number of Latino scientists seeking environmental and policy solutions to address Latino childhood obesity.
Latinos are currently the most populous and fastest growing U.S. ethnic minority.

And according to recent estimates, nearly 40 percent of Latino children and teens are overweight and more than 20 percent are obese.

Get full text of the national briefs:
- Addressing Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity Among Latino Youth
- Physical Activity, Overweight and Obesity Among Latino Youth
- Influence of Media on Overweight and Obesity Among Latino Youth

Get full text of the grantee briefs:
- Dr. Shari Barkin, Exposure to Recreation Center Increases Use by Latino Families with Young Children (Tennessee)
- Dr. Cristina Barroso, Body Image and Childhood Obesity in Mexican-Americans (Texas)
- Dr. Alexy Arauz Boudreau, A Family Approach to Promote Positive Lifestyle Choices among Latino Children (Massachusetts)
- Dr. Dina Castro, Community Garden Project Helps Increase Latino Children’s Access to Healthy Foods, Saves Families Money (North Carolina)
- Dr. Dharma Cortes, Improving Food Purchasing Selection among Low-Income Spanish-Speaking Latinos (Massachusetts)
- Dr. Robert W. Dudley, A Family-Centered Program to Promote Wellness for Latino Children (Connecticut)
- Dr. Claudia L. Galindo, Obesity Among Young Latino Children: Disparities and Changes Over Time (Maryland)
- Dr. Zan Gao, Impact of Physical Activity on Physical Health and Academic Performance (Texas)
- Dr. Meizi He, Latino Faith-Based Communities’ Perspective on Childhood Obesity Prevention (Texas)
- Dr. Harris Huberman, Using Spanish Parenting Newsletters to Reduce Young Latino Children’s Weight (New York)
- Dr. Rebecca London, Community-Based After-School Programs and Youth Physical Fitness (California)
- Dr. Nelda Mier, Built Environment Policy for Physical Activity in Mexican-American Children (Texas)
- Dr. Carmen Nevarez, Salud Tiene Sabor: Creating Healthy Eating Environments for Latino Families (California)
- Dr. Norma Olvera, Combating Obesity and Inactivity in Latina Girls (Texas)
- Dr. Javier Rosado, Paying Attention to Children’s Weight in Pediatric Primary Care (Florida)
- Dr. Emma Sanchez, School District Compliance with P.E. Policies Matters for Physical Fitness among Latino Children (California)
- Dr. Monika Stodolska, Crime, Physical Activity and Outdoor Recreation Among Latino Adolescents (Illinois)
- Dr. Myriam E. Torres, Voices of Latina Mothers and School Staff on Childhood Obesity (South Carolina)
- Dr. Miriam Y. Vega, La Familia en la Cocina is Speaking Two Languages (New York)
- Dr. Angela R. Wiley, A Family-Centered Program to Promote Wellness for Latino Children (Illinois)

Get more details at www.salud-america.org. For more Latino health news, please visit our blog or follow us on Twitter @SaludToday.
Salud America! is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The program aims to unite and increase the number of Latino researchers, policymakers and community leaders engaged seeking environmental and policy solutions to the epidemic. The network is directed by the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. For more information, visit www.salud-america.org.

The Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio investigates the causes and solutions to the unequal impact of cancer and chronic disease among certain populations, including Latinos, in San Antonio, South Texas and the nation. The IHPR, founded in 2006, uses evidence-guided research, training and community outreach to improve the health of those at a disadvantage due to race/ethnicity or social determinants, such as education or income. Visit the IHPR online at http://ihpr.uthscsa.edu or follow its blog at http://www.saludtoday.com/blog.