The Role of Schools in Preventing Childhood Obesity

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The childhood obesity epidemic is one of the major public health, social, and economic challenges of the 21st century. Consequences of this epidemic include increased risk for chronic diseases, social and psychological problems among young people, and high health care costs. Physical activity and eating behaviors that affect the childhood obesity epidemic are influenced by many sectors of society, including families, community organizations, health care providers, faith-based institutions, government agencies, the media, and schools. While schools cannot solve the problem alone, they have a unique role to play in addressing childhood obesity. This issue of the President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports Research Digest summarizes data on overweight among young people, describes 10 evidence-based strategies schools can use to improve student nutrition and physical activity, and addresses challenges to improvement.

The complete article appears in the September 2006 issue of the President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports Research Digest. The Research Digest is published four times a year and includes manuscripts related to physical activity and health. Articles are available free through the President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports at http://www.fitness.gov/pcpfs_research_digs.htm

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