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## Research Finds Promising Approaches to Prevent Latino Childhood Obesity



Guided grocery store trips, menu labeling at restaurants, community gardens, and video-game-based exercise programs are among several promising, culturally-appropriate ways to prevent obesity among Latino children, according to new [studies](#) from *Salud America!* published in a supplement to the March issue of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

*Salud America!* is based at the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio.

The supplement focuses on *Salud America!* achievements in its first five years, and features 19 new studies on effective approaches for preventing/controlling Latino childhood obesity.

Papers highlight Latino culture, health, and policies in communities across the nation.

Findings include:

- **Study:** After a sample of Spanish-speaking low-income Latino families participated in education on nutritious food selection and a guided grocery store trip, many participants adopted instructions on buying budget-friendly, healthier alternative foods.
- **Study:** 33% of patrons of an ethnic foods marketplace in South Los Angeles reported that posted calorie information influenced their food purchasing decisions.
- **Study:** Tending community gardens or attending nutrition/cooking workshops improved or maintained children's body mass indices, and increased the amount of fruits and vegetables in their homes.
- **Study:** The use of active video games in school increased elementary school students' cardiorespiratory endurance and math scores.

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## Director's Corner

### Letter to members from Dr. Amelie Ramirez

Creating school food environments that support healthy eating among children is a recommended national strategy to prevent childhood obesity, and is shown to have positive effects on student behavior, development, and academic performance.

To help children learn lifelong healthy eating habits, researchers developed the Healthy Eating Design Guidelines for School Architecture.

These [guidelines](#) provide practitioners in architecture and public health as well as school system administrators with a practical set of spatially organized and theory-based strategies for making school environments more conducive to learning about and practicing healthy eating behaviors.

**Watch** how the Buckingham Elementary School redesign project in Dillwyn, Va., used the tool to improve its ability to adopt a healthy nutrition curriculum and promote healthy eating.

At the school, every aspect of the architecture – the furniture, color palette, and materials – was designed to promote healthy behaviors, such as:

Some of the design principles incorporated include:

- A food lab where kids can learn how to prepare healthy foods;
- A cafeteria which facilitates fresh food production;
- A school garden for kids to grow food for the school cafeteria and burn a few calories;
- A lower-stress environment to address light, noise levels, air quality and crowding; and
- Layouts that encourage more movement and the use of attractive water fountains.

This project is the first of its kind and represents a brand new way of thinking about childhood obesity prevention.

#### Amelie G. Ramirez, Dr.P.H.

Director, *Salud America!*

Director, Institute for Health Promotion Research  
UT Health Science Center at San Antonio



## News Brief

### Salud America! Welcomes New Employees

The Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio has several new *Salud America!* staff members.

**Meet** the new *Salud America!* TV producer and director, Juan “Rick” Carrillo, who is using his acting and film-making experience to create films that will promote health and wellness to Latino communities.

Other new employees include our new internet curators, Rosalie Aguilar, Shannon Baldwin, and Chelsea Cox. Welcome!



Juan “Rick” Carrillo

## Funding

### Grant Listings

RWJF, the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research (NCCOR), have obesity-related funding opportunities that are seeking applications, or compile lists of funding opportunities.

[RWJF](#)

[NIH](#)

[NCCOR](#)

# Stepping Up Against Latino Childhood Obesity

## Investing in the Health of Youth in Santa Cruz County, Calif.



Check out this new [video](#) about healthy changes being made in Santa Cruz County, Calif., one of six winners of the inaugural RWJF Roadmaps to Health Prize, which honors outstanding community partnerships helping people live healthier lives.

Santa Cruz County's population is about 32% Hispanic.

Check out the other five winners of the RWJF Roadmaps to Health Prize below:



New Orleans



Cambridge, Mass.



Manistique, Mich.



Fall River, Mass.



Minneapolis, Minn.

## Research

### New Rankings: How Healthy is Your County?

The 2013 County Health Rankings are now [available](#).

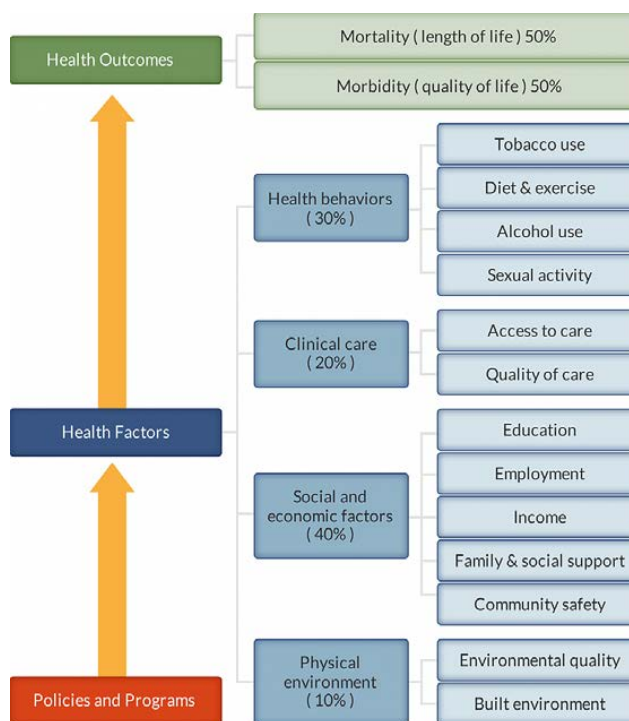
The rankings, now in their fourth year, show that how long and how well people live depends on many factors, including rates of smoking, education, and access to healthy food.

National trends this year show:

- Child poverty rates have not improved since 2000, with more than one in five children living in poverty.
- Violent crime has decreased by almost 50 percent over the past two decades.
- The counties where people don't live as long and don't feel as well have the highest rates of smoking, teen births, and physical inactivity, as well as more preventable hospital stays.
- Teen birth rates are more than twice as high in the least healthy counties than in the healthiest counties.

Watch a [webinar](#) about using the rankings website, and see this [figure](#) to see how the rankings model works.

The County Health Rankings & Roadmaps program is a collaboration between RWJF and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute.



County Health Rankings model ©2012 UWPHI

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### Latino Childhood Obesity

In the supplement, medical and political leaders – such as San Antonio Mayor Julián Castro and the California Endowment's George Flores – also weigh in on the program's impact.

“This *Salud America!* supplement is the culmination of several years of diligence, passion, and hard work in identifying and examining the most promising policy-relevant strategies to reduce and prevent obesity among Latino children,” said Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH, MPH, director of *Salud America!* and the IHPR.

View the full supplement [here](#).



*Salud America!* Latino childhood obesity research was highlighted in a symposium at the American College of Preventive Medicine annual meeting in Arizona on Feb. 22, 2013. Pictured among the symposium presenters is *Salud America!* Director Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez (front row, third from left).



### Research Briefs

#### Compared to Other Nations, U.S. Obesity Linked to Race

##### More Than Income

In most countries, obesity is linked to gender and socioeconomic standing, as poorly educated women are two to three times more likely to be overweight, *PBS Newshour* [reports](#). But in the United States, obesity is

linked more to race than income, as African Americans and Hispanics are more likely to be overweight than non-Hispanic whites or Asian Americans.

##### Issues among U.S. Hispanic Youths

Given that, by 2040, 1 in 3 U.S. youths will be Latino, *Hispanically Speaking News* [delved](#) into different aspects of the lives of Latino youths, including topics of insurance coverage, parental status, education and health.

## Policy & Built Environment Corner

### Six Steps to Reduce Health Disparities

A new program, *Finding Answers: Disparities Research for Change*, is offering some resources to contribute toward efforts to reduce racial/ethnic disparities in health care in 2013.

The program also offers a six-step **framework** to help people and organizations reduce disparities and improve health care quality.

The program also has a new **FAIR Database**, a comprehensive collection of research on addressing racial/ethnic health disparities. It can be searched by health topic (for instance: asthma, diabetes) or by strategy (for instance: pay for performance, nurse-led interventions).

You can also join the program on Twitter by following [@FndgAnswers](#) and receive tips, tools, and updates on the latest developments in disparities research.



### Report: Multi-Level Changes Needed to Reduce Latino Obesity Epidemic

A combination of regulation of unhealthy foods, support from community organizations, and individual behavior changes is crucial to reducing high rates of obesity among Latinos, according to a recent **report** from the The Hispanic Institute.

The report, "Obesity: Hispanic America's Big Challenge," details the impact of diabetes and heart disease on the Latino community, which suffers from those obesity-related conditions at rates higher than Whites.

The report also offers recommendations and examines the positive roles of diet, exercise, and technology.

"Of course, we're responsible for what we eat and drink, but we're also subject to the effects of massive advertising and misleading promotional campaigns—especially on our children and the poor," said Gus West, president of The Hispanic Institute, in a statement.



## Video Roundup

Click on the images to see the associated video.



**'The Real Bears' in Spanish**



**Latino Couple Support Each Other's Lifestyle Goals**



**Puppets and Peers for Latino Obesity Prevention**



**Creatively Teaching Health Education in Schools**



**Healthier Foods in Schools**



**Healthier Beverage Recommendations**



**Salud America!: Introduction to Latino Child Obesity**



**Salud America!: Creating Latino Change Agents**

### About the E-newsletter

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

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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](#).