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San Antonio Reports Significant Drop in Obesity Rates



In just two years, obesity rates in San Antonio and Bexar County dropped from 35.1 percent in 2010 to 28.5 percent in 2012 on the heels of new health and fitness initiatives across the city, said San Antonio Mayor Julián Castro at a press conference July 31, 2013.

The city now has a lower rate of obesity than the current Texas average (29.3%).

“We now have evidence that our investments are paying off and positively impacting the health of our families and the overall quality of life in San Antonio,” Castro said.

Obesity rates also declined among local racial/ethnic minority populations, including Latinos, which saw a drop in obesity from 40.5 percent to 29.6 percent –but the decline was even greater among those with higher incomes and more education, said Dr. Thomas Schlenker, director of the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District (Metro Health).

“We have a special work to do with those who are less educated and those

of lower income,” Schlenker said. “That’s where we need to invest the most going forward.”

The new statistics comes from survey data collected before and after the city received a federal Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) grant.

In 2010, Metro Health received a \$15.6 million CPPW obesity prevention grant that allowed it to partner with multiple organizations such as the Parks and Recreation Department, Public Works, the Office of Sustainability and the Mayor’s Fitness Council, San Antonio Housing Authority, YMCA of Greater San Antonio, San Antonio Sports, the University of Texas at San Antonio, the University of Texas School of Public Health, and local school districts, to develop and implement many strategies and programs for reducing obesity.

CPPW initiatives include the open-streets event called *Síclovia*, 108 salad bars in schools, ride-to-own bikes,

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Director's Corner

Letter to members from Dr. Amelie Ramirez

We're proud to release six new packages of research materials this year to highlight strategies to address obesity among Latino children.

The packages focus on the following six topics:

- *Healthier School Snacks*, May 2013
- *Better Food in the Neighborhood*, June 2013
- *Active Spaces*, July 2013
- *Active Play*, July 2013
- *Healthier Marketing*, August 2013
- *Sugary Drinks*, September 2013

Each package will include a research review, an issue brief, an animated video narrated by Latino children, and an infographic.

Find each package at www.salud-america.org.

We believe researchers, decision-makers, community leaders, school officials, parents and even children can use these research materials to learn about the problems related to Latino childhood obesity, and what can be done about them.

Amelie G. Ramirez, Dr.P.H.

Director, *Salud America!*

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

Salud America! is developing research packages on the following six topics:



Healthier School Snacks



Better Food in the Neighborhood



Active Spaces



Active Play



Healthier Marketing



Sugary Drinks



News Briefs

Report: *Salud America!* Summit Takes Aim at Latino Childhood Obesity

San Antonio Mayor Julián Castro and New York Assemblyman Felix Ortiz urged local leaders and national stakeholders to work together to transform Latino communities into healthier places to reduce Latino childhood obesity at the recent 4th Annual *Salud America!* Summit. Several other representatives spoke about marketing, community change, and demographics on behalf of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, other health groups, and many Latino-focused agencies. Check out our new report on the proceedings. Also check out a Spanish-language video [report](#) on the summit from *Univision* and a [blog post](#) from *MomsRising*.

RWJF, AHA Launch 'Voices for Healthy Kids'

To reverse childhood obesity by 2015, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is working with the American Heart Association (AHA) to create and manage an advocacy initiative focused on creating healthy policies in each of the six RWJF target areas. Voices for Healthy Kids will have six teams of experts, one for each policy area, that will help advance partnerships and "build sustainability for the movement" to reverse childhood obesity, said Jill Birnbaum of AHA. AHA is mobilizing teams to work both in communities and alongside legislators to create healthier environments for children in underserved regions. They have also set aside some of their own funds specifically for lobbying. High-poverty, minority populations are priority populations in these efforts. *Salud America!* Director Amelie G. Ramirez will serve on the project's strategic advisory committee. Read more [here](#).



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

Initiative Challenges Latino Families to Go a ‘Day Without Sugar’

Most children consume 30 teaspoons of sugar a day, much higher than the 9 teaspoons recommended by the American Heart Association—and unhealthy diets are a significant contributor to the Latino childhood obesity epidemic.

A new initiative is calling for Latino children and their families to embrace a healthier diet by limiting their sugar intake.

For the [Day Without Sugar Challenge](#), participants are asked to complete one full day without having any sugary drinks, candies, cookies, or sweet baked goods, and to avoid other foods with added sugars.

The initiative, launched by national Hispanic publisher *Arte Público* Press, also encourages community organizations, educators, and families to address the issue of high sugar consumption, which can contribute to unhealthy diets and weights.

The initiative [website](#) offers free resources, including:

- a toolkit for classrooms and organizations that outlines fun activities that educators and parents can use to teach kids about sugar and its presence in everyday foods;



Check out the Day Without Sugar coloring book [here](#).

- low-sugar recipes and tips for families; and
- a bilingual children’s coloring book, *A Day Without Sugar / Un día sin azúcar* by Diane de Anda with illustrations by Janet Montecalvo.

“The risks to Latino children’s health are enormous and it’s vital that we teach children to embrace healthy eating habits,” said Dr. Nicolás Kanellos, founder of *Arte Público* Press. “Too much sugar is a big part of the problem, but there’s nothing sweeter than good health.”



News Briefs

Students to Add Park Space, Walkways to Revitalize Neighborhood

Some University of Houston architecture students are trying to revitalize a local neighborhood by reusing empty lots around an abandoned mall and adding park space and pedestrian-friendly walkways, [KTRK-TV reports](#). Houston’s population is about 44 percent Latino.



How a Latino Family is Eating Healthier

Check out these [videos](#) about how a Latino family—the Eguez Hopkins family—is planting their own produce garden and eating healthy on a budget. The videos are from [Manantial de Salud](#), a federally funded Latino grassroots health network sponsored by the Latino Healthcare Forum in the Dove Springs neighborhood in Austin, Texas.

Research

Report: Becoming an American Can Be Bad for Your Health

A growing body of mortality research on immigrants has shown that the longer they live in the United States, the higher their rates of heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes, according to a *New York Times* [report](#).

According to the report:

“For Hispanics, now the nation’s largest immigrant group, the foreign-born live about three years longer than their American-born counterparts, several studies have found.

Why does life in the United States – despite its sophisticated health care system and high per capita wages – lead to worse health? New research is showing



Esther Angeles, 41, with her daughter, Johanna Marisol Gomez, 7. Ms. Angeles has developed diabetes since coming to the United States and struggles to see that her daughter eats healthfully.

J. Michael Short for The New York Times

that the immigrant advantage wears off with the adoption of American behaviors – smoking, drinking, high-calorie diets and sedentary lifestyles.”

Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez, director of *Salud America!* and the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, was quoted in the news report about the problem of Hispanics’ high obesity rates:

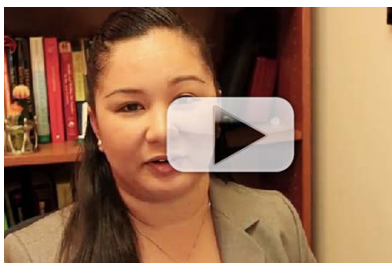
“We have a time bomb that’s going to go off. Obesity rates are increasing. Diabetes is exploding. The cultural protection Hispanics had is being eroded.”



Research Briefs

Study: Targeting Obesity Control in Latin America and the U.S.

A new [pubcast](#), “Obesity Control in Latin American and United States Latinos: A Systematic Review,” examines research programs that combined physical activity and healthy eating to address obesity can help guide efforts to tackle the epidemic in the United States and Latin America. The pubcast, published by the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, is from the Institute for Behavioral and Community Health at San Diego State University. Read more about this research [here](#).



Risa Lavizzo-Mourey

Envisioning a Healthier America

In her 2013 annual [message](#), RWJF President and CEO Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, MD, MBA, reflects on the Foundation’s bold new vision in which “we, as a nation, will strive together to create a culture of health that enables everyone in our diverse society to lead healthy lives now and for generations to come.” Watch video of the address [here](#).



Expanding the Effort to Improve the Health and Success of Young Men of Color

Boys and young men of color are more likely to grow up in poverty, live in unsafe neighborhoods, and attend schools that lack the basic resources and supports that kids need in order to thrive. That’s why RWJF is investing in successful models that can be strengthened and spread to help even more youths. RWJF recently [announced](#) grants of approximately \$500,000 each to 10 organizations through Forward Promise, its \$9.5 million initiative to improve the health and success of boys and young men of color. Grantees were selected for their innovative, community-based programs that strengthen health, education, and employment outcomes for middle school and high school-aged boys and young men.

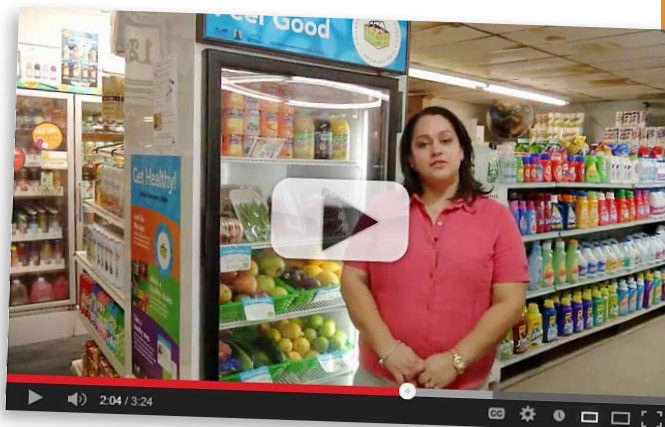
Policy & Built Environment Corner

Philadelphia Bodegas Add Healthier Foods

Many Latino families lack access to healthy food in their neighborhood.

Check out this [new video](#) about the Healthy Corner Store Network, through which The Food Trust partnered with more than 600 stores—including many *bodegas* that serve Latino communities—to help them introduce healthier foods and provide training on how to properly stock, display, and sell them.

The video show one *bodega* corner store owner, Clara Santos, who is now stocking healthier items, including fruits and vegetables, on her shelves.



Resources

Toolkit: Healthy Community Design

Interested in trying to make your community healthier? Be sure to check out the new Healthy Community Design Toolkit, which spells out steps for Arizona residents to get involved in community planning to promote healthy physical environments. The guide was developed by the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) in collaboration with the ADHS Healthy Community Design Collaborative. Even if you're not from Arizona, the plan can serve as a model for local efforts in your neck of the woods. Check out the plan [here](#)



Report: Pedaling Towards Equity

A new report indicates that more than 85 percent of people of color (African American, Hispanic, Asian, Native American and mixed-race) have

a positive view of bicyclists, and 71 percent say their community would be a better place to live if bicycling were safer and more comfortable. The report, released by the League of American Bicyclists and the Sierra Club, features data on demographic ridership, the effect of safe cycling infrastructure on ridership, new immigrant perceptions of bicycling, as well as the economic impact of transportation and health inequity. Read more [here](#).

Guide: Dig, Eat, & Be Healthy

Growing food on public property—from vacant fields, to schoolyards, parks, utility rights-of-way, and even the rooftops of public buildings—can yield a diverse “crop” of community benefits. Fresh, healthy food is just the beginning: Growing food on public property can also promote civic participation, public safety, food literacy, job skills, and urban greening (i.e., healthier, more vibrant places). This guide provides users with the tools they need to access public land for growing food. Read more [here](#).



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San Antonio Reports Significant Drop in Obesity Rates

Fitness in the Park classes, the [Fit Family Challenge](#), a [menu labeling program](#), and shared use agreements to open more recreational facilities to the public.

Shared use agreements and access to playgrounds are increasingly seen as key to fighting childhood

obesity, according to a [report](#) in the *San Antonio Express-News*, which features research led by Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez, director of *Salud America!* and the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio. Still, there is more work to be done.

The latest statistics also show that the percentage of local adults who were overweight, but not obese, rose from 34% in 2010 to 36% in 2012. “We’re going to take San Antonio from one of the fattest cities to one of the fittest cities,” Castro said. Go [here](#) for more information.

Video Roundup

Click on the images to see the associated video.



Hispanic Youth Greatly Exposed to Unhealthy Food Ads on TV



Texas School District Improves Students' Physical Activity



Families' Healthy Eating Taste Test (Spanish)



Families Can Dance (Spanish)



Latinas Get Healthy through Dance (Spanish)



Playworks: Creating a New Social Norm



Eating on a Healthy Budget



Latino Couple Supports Each Other's Weight-Loss Goals

About the E-newsletter

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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](#).