OBESITY AND SOUTH ASIANS

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

• Overweight, obesity and an inactive lifestyle increase the chances of disease such as diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and cancer.¹

• The terms overweight and obesity refer to a person’s overall body weight.²
  o Overweight: Having extra body weight from muscle, bone, fat, and/or water.
  o Obesity: Having high amount of extra body fat.

• Overweight and obesity are the result of several factors:³
  o Increased body weight results from an energy imbalance that causes more calories to be stored than burned.
  o Body weight is also the result of genetics, behavior, the environment, culture, physiology, and socioeconomic status.
  o Behavior and environment are two important factors upon which parents (or families) can have the most influence.

• Obesity and overweight are measured by a person’s body mass (or level of fatness).

• South Asian children are more likely to become obese (compared with whites and blacks), with obesity rates of 25.7% for boys and 26.2% for girls, respectively.⁴

• South Asians have a greater risk for heart disease because they have higher levels of triglycerides (bad cholesterol) and lower levels of HDL (good cholesterol).⁵

• South Asians tend to have substantially greater body fat, in particular abdominal fat, than whites.⁶
  o Having excessive fat tissue in and around the abdomen is also referred to as metabolic syndrome.
  o People with metabolic syndrome are at increased risk for heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, and diabetes, among others.⁷

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS⁸

• Having extra fat around the waist;
• Inability to exercise as much as one used to be able to exercise previously; and/or,
• Scale showing you have gained too much weight.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

• It is recommended that children and adolescents participate in at least 30 minutes of physical activity at least 5 days a week to stay healthy and to prevent overweight and obesity.
• In addition to preventing or reducing overweight and obesity, physical activity can increase bone mass and muscular strength, and can reduce blood pressure, anxiety, and stress during childhood and into adulthood.

• If necessary, treatment for overweight and obesity includes incorporating lifestyle changes as well as other behavioral modifications.

• Visit with your (or your child’s) health care provider periodically to discuss issues related to physical exercise, proper nutrition and maintaining a healthy weight.

RESOURCES
National
Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
Website: www.cdc.gov/obesity

The Obesity Society
Phone: (301) 563.0526
Website: www.obesity.org

California
First 5 California
Phone (916) 263-1050
Website: www.ccfc.ca.gov

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3 Ibid.
5 Ibid.

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