



**Date:** April 2, 2009

**General questions:** Trish Neiworth, 971-673-0206

**Technical questions:** Mel Kohn, M.D., M.P.H., acting state public health director,  
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## National Public Health Week

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- How can changes in our surroundings benefit our health?
- What are some ways to talk more effectively about public health?
- And what is a "weight control fairy tale" anyway?

You can expect these and other questions to be answered during Oregon's observance of National Public Health Week, which begins Monday in Salem and Portland. Speakers, exhibits and activities will focus on improving health of Oregonians of all ages.

Topics also will include how communities can address obesity, reduce health disparities among various Oregon populations and communicate more effectively about health.

"Obesity is one of the leading emerging public health issues of our time," says Mel Kohn, M.D., M.P.H., acting state public health director in the Oregon Department of Human Services Public Health Division. "Almost two-thirds of adult Oregonians are now either overweight or obese, and with that has come an epidemic of diabetes, heart disease and other weight-related problems.

"What has caused this? Our genes haven't changed," Kohn says. "But the environment around us has changed in ways that have increased our intake of calories and decreased opportunities to be physically active – from cheap fast food to video games, from buildings that encourage taking the elevator to neighborhoods where it's easier and safer to drive than walk. We need to change that environment so that it supports us in making healthy choices."

Kohn will join state Sen. Ginny Burdick of Portland and other legislators and leaders Monday to “walk their talk” by kicking off National Public Health Week in Oregon with a one-mile walk near the State Capitol. Other highlights of Public Health Week include nationally recognized speakers presenting innovative ideas about public health. At the end of the week, Deborah Cohen, M.D., M.P.H., senior natural scientist at California’s RAND Corporation, will present a provocative talk in Portland entitled “Willpower and other Weight Control Fairy Tales.”

All Public Health Week activities are free and open to the public, thanks to financial support from community partners. For a complete activities listing see: [www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/spotlight/ph/2009.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/spotlight/ph/2009.shtml)

## **Highlights of the week’s schedule:**

### **Monday, April 6**

*9 a.m. to 3 p.m.*, Galleria, Oregon State Capitol, Salem: Exhibits presented by public health programs and partners.

*12 p.m. to 1 p.m.*, Oregon State Capitol steps, Salem: Kick-off of week with one-mile “State Walk for the Public’s Health” with state Sen. Ginny Burdick and other members of the legislative assembly; Mel Kohn, M.D., M.P.H., acting state public health director, DHS Public Health Division; Jim Hill, board chair of Northwest Health Foundation; and others.

*12 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.*, Room 1-B, Portland State Office Building, 800 N.E. Oregon St, Portland: “Using Health Impact Assessments and Other Tools to Support Decision Making in Oregon,” a panel moderated by Nancy Goff, Office of Environmental Public Health. Panelists include Noelle Dobson, Community Health Partnership; Molly Haynes, Kaiser Permanente; Sandy Johnson, Multnomah County Health Department; Mel Rader, Upstream Public Health; Mara Gross, Coalition for a Livable Future; Kirsten Aird and Jae Douglas, DHS Public Health Division.

### **Tuesday, April 7**

*12 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.*, Smith Center, Vanport Auditorium, Portland State University, Portland: “Talking Public Health: Developing America’s Second Language,” presented by Dr. Lawrence Wallack, dean, College of Urban & Public Affairs, Portland State University, and emeritus professor of public health at the University of California, Berkeley.

### **Wednesday, April 8**

*12 to 1:30 p.m.*, 1-B, Portland State Office Building, 800 N.E. Oregon St., Portland: “Framing our Message: How We Talk about Adolescents,” presented by Glynis

Shea, communications director, Konopka Institute for Best Practices in Adolescent Health and Healthy Youth Development Prevention Resource Center, Department of Pediatrics, University of Minnesota Medical School, Minneapolis.

*12 to 1 p.m.*, lobby, Portland State Office Building, 800 N.E. Oregon St., Portland: Meet in lobby for a guided public health walk in northeast Portland.

### **Thursday, April 9**

*12 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.*, 1-B, Portland State Office Building, 800 N.E. Oregon St., Portland: "Social Determinants of Health and Disease," presented by Dr. Siobhan Maty, assistant professor, School of Community Health, Portland State University.

### **Friday, April 10**

*12 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.*, Urban Center, 2nd Floor Gallery, 212G, College of Urban & Public Affairs, Portland State University, Portland: "Willpower and Other Weight Control Fairy Tales: Rethinking the Causes and Solutions to Obesity," presented by Deborah Cohen, M.D., senior natural scientist, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, Calif.

In addition, public health programs and partners will present exhibits and the results of a student photo contest in the Portland State Office Building lobby, April 7 – 10. Participating Public Health Week partners include Community Health Priorities, a Project of the Northwest Health Foundation; Community Health Partnership, Oregon's Public Health Institute; Oregon Conference of Local Health Officials (CLHO); Oregon Public Health Association; Oregon Master of Public Health Program (OMPH); Portland State University College of Urban & Public Affairs and School of Community Health; Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU); Kaiser Permanente; Oregon AARP; Environmedia; Upstream Public Health; Marion County Health Department; Multnomah County Health Department; Oregon AWARE; Safe Kids Oregon; Woodburn Youth Advisory Board; Oregon Health Licensing Agency (OHLA); Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force; American Public Health Association; Association of Schools of Public Health; and Oregon Department of Human Services Public Health Division.