

# Oregon Public Health Connection

An e-bulletin co-produced by the Oregon Public Health Division, DHS, and the Conference of Local Health Officials

April 29, 2009

Volume 4, Number 4

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## Top Priority:

## Obesity Prevention, Food Safety, and Healthy Eating

*(Editor's note: This issue of the Oregon Public Health Connection is devoted to food issues including the latest information on obesity prevention, food safety, and healthy eating.)*



**The full report of House Bill 3486 advisory committee may be found at:**  
[www.healthoregon.org/diabetes](http://www.healthoregon.org/diabetes)

**The report of the Senate Bill 931 task force may be found at:**  
[www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/copi/index.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/copi/index.shtml)

*(Photo courtesy of the Oregon Chronic Disease Prevention Program, Oregon Public Health Division, DHS.)*

### Latest Oregon Obesity and Diabetes Reports

In the 2007 legislative session, lawmakers charged the Oregon Department of Human Services with developing a plan and recommendations to slow the rate of diabetes and obesity. House Bill 3486 declared that diabetes linked to obesity is an emergency in the state of Oregon.

A 30-member advisory committee met for seven months to create a strategic plan. The plan calls for funding dedicated to battling the obesity epidemic, consideration of underlying health inequities and helping consumers by making the healthy choice the easy choice. Committee members found that to achieve success, we must change the environments where Oregonians live, work and play and that healthy food and access to physical activity must be available to all.

Senate Bill 931 created a task force that provided the legislature with recommendations for policy changes that would address the obesity epidemic in Oregon. Among the recommendations:

- Provide an initial investment of at least \$10 million per year in a comprehensive obesity prevention program.
- Provide an initial investment of at least \$3.5 million per biennium to support physical activity in schools.

The report also recommended policy changes in the areas of land use and transportation, and changes in school, worksite and health care settings.

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## Best Practices: Menu labeling policy in Multnomah County part of national study



**Chain restaurants affected in Multnomah County have until the end of 2009 to comply.** (Photo courtesy Multnomah County Health Department.)

In February 2009, Multnomah County Board of Commissioners unanimously approved rules for the county's Chain Restaurant Nutrition Labeling Policy, presented by the health department as one strategy within a comprehensive approach to address high rates of obesity and overweight in the area. The policy follows measures passed in New York City and King County Washington.

Multnomah County's policy requires that all chain restaurants in the county with at least 15 outlets nationwide display calorie counts of all standard menu items on printed menus, menu boards, food tags, and drive-thru order boards. The restaurants must also provide information about carbohydrates, sodium, trans fat, and saturated fat to customers upon request at the point of ordering. The rules went into effect March 12, 2009 and the restaurants have until the end of the year to comply.

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## Hot Topics: Fresh Choices for the Oregon WIC Program

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) is preparing for the biggest transformation the program has seen in over 30 years! Oregon WIC has adopted the project name **Fresh Choices** to reflect the changes to the food packages. As of August, participants will begin receiving the new food packages.

The WIC food package changes are based on recommendations from the Institute of Medicine, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. In addition to improved nutrient content, the changes reinforce healthy choices and support WIC's focus on breastfeeding. Overall, these **Fresh Choices** are lower in saturated fat and cholesterol, higher in fiber and for the first time ever – include fresh fruits and vegetables!

### Changes Support Breastfeeding

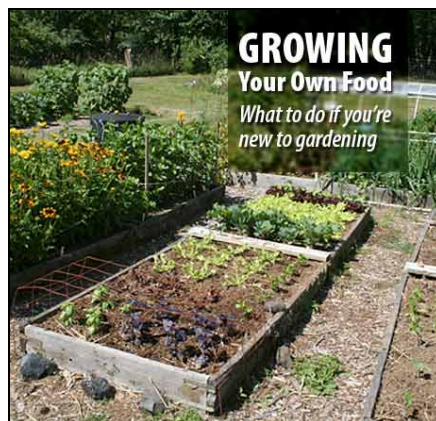
Improving breastfeeding initiation and duration continues to be a top priority for the Oregon WIC program. Breastfeeding initiation rates for women in Oregon are among the top three in the nation. Within three months, however, only about half are still fully breastfeeding, despite the AAP recommendation to breastfeed for at least one year. Research has repeatedly shown that early introduction of formula is a key factor associated with early weaning. To support successful breastfeeding, Oregon WIC will not be providing formula in the first month for breastfed babies.

### New Federal Requirements for Medical Documentation

USDA has established new requirements for medical documentation before a WIC participant, with qualifying medical conditions, can receive medical formula/food in addition to the other foods WIC provides. The **WIC Medical Documentation Form** will replace prescriptions (RX) from health care providers.

For more information on **Fresh Choices**, see: <http://oregon.gov/DHS/ph/wic/index.shtml>

## Hot Topics: Gardening and Environmental Public Health



(Photo courtesy OSU Extension Service.)

Nationally, gardening is on the rise. This trend seems to be related to the economic downturn and the public's ever growing green conscience.

Overall, the incentive for gardening seems to involve saving money at the grocery store. However, some gardeners are also focused on food safety and believe that having control over the way food is grown makes it safer. Recalls of produce contaminated by harmful bacteria, concerns about the health impacts of pesticides and the working and living conditions of farmworkers also directly relates to the public's escalating interest in gardening.

From an environmental public health perspective, gardening is a health promoting activity. Gardening promotes physical activity, diets rich in fresh produce, and awareness about connections between health and environmental factors like water, soil and air quality. When we grow our own food, we gain insight into environmental conditions that are essential for life. The farther removed we are from the food that we eat, the less likely it is that we will understand our connection to the environmental factors required to grow our food and get it to the table.

Planting species that are well adapted to Oregon's climate is a critical aspect of sustainable gardening. Native plants often do not require a lot of supplemental inputs like water and chemicals (i.e. fertilization, herbicides and pesticides). Sustainable gardening incorporates integrated pest management practices, which in turn reduces health risks for people, animals and the environment.

The Oregon State University (OSU) Master Gardener Program provides information about sustainable gardening practices. OSU Master Gardener volunteers share unbiased, research-based information to diagnose plant problems and offer sustainable solutions. [OSU's Gardening Encyclopedia](#) is another helpful resource that provides an Oregon specific gardening calendar and a variety of garden-related publications. Contact your [county or regional Master Gardener Program](#) to get answers to your gardening questions.

For more information contact Kari Christensen, M.P.H., Public Health Educator, Office of Environmental Public Health, Oregon Public Health Division, DHS; Master Gardener, 2009 Intern, Oregon State University Extension Service, [kari.a.christensen@state.or.us](mailto:kari.a.christensen@state.or.us)

## PH: In the News

Swine flu concerns spur local preparations (Washington County, OR.) – Deputy tri-county health officer Paul Lewis said with the widespread nature of infection around the globe, its likely cases will turn up in Washington County eventually. (Courtesy The Hillsboro Argus, Washington County, OR.)

Projected cuts will hurt health department (Jackson County, OR.) – Jackson County braces for 20 percent cutbacks for its Health and Human Services Department. (Courtesy The Mail Tribune, Jackson County, OR.)

What to do with mass fatalities? (Columbia County, OR.) – The seminar was presented by the Oregon Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program for local emergency-service. (Courtesy The Daily Astorian, Astoria, OR.)

Hood River gains "green" recognition (Hood River County, OR.) – Hood River is named an EPA Green City, unveils two signs during an Earth Day event denoting the distinction. (Courtesy Hood River News, Hood River, OR.)

Eastern Oregon residents to comment on state budget cuts (Malheur County, OR.) – Residents of Southeast Oregon have the opportunity to weigh in on Oregon's budget woes and proposed budget cuts. (Courtesy The Argus Observer, Malheur County, OR.)

Committee votes to create Oregon Health Authority (Salem, OR.) – The House Health Committee passed a bill to create an Oregon Health Authority, a new agency to oversee health reform. The bill now goes to the Joint Ways and Means Committee. (Courtesy The Oregonian, Portland, OR.)



The Oregon Public Health Connection has been recognized by NPHIC with the 2008 Bronze Award for Excellence in Public Health Communication.

## Oregon Public Health Week 2009

### Week raises awareness among legislators, partners, advocates, students, others



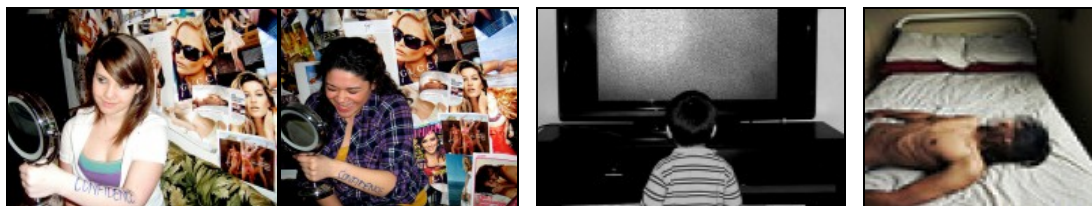
**Acting Oregon Public Health Director Mel Kohn, M.D., M.P.H., state legislators, and Jim Hill, chair of the Northwest Health Foundation, are among those who kicked off Oregon Public Health Week 2009 at the State Capitol, April 6 with a "State Walk for the Public's Health."** (Photo courtesy Oregon Department of Human Services.)

A first-ever public health student photo contest drew more than 80 entries from all over Oregon, with teens asked to submit photographs that reflect what they see as public health issues of today. Staff learned the latest exercise techniques including Poekoelan Tjimindie Tulen, an Indonesian Martial Arts activity, and Nia, another martial arts-based discipline. Healthy snacks were provided for sampling and a survey was conducted based on the types of healthy snack items were most desired.

"It was truly unprecedented for us to have this kind of presence over the week," said Acting Oregon Public Health Director and State Health Officer, Mel Kohn, M.D., M.P.H. "I was impressed with the creativity and resourcefulness brought to this event. I'm really excited about what this gives us to build upon for the future." More than two dozen staff and partners planned the week. A complete listing of this year's public health week activities, including presentations from the speakers' series is available on the OPHD web site at <http://oregon.gov/DHS/ph/spillover/ph/2009.shtml>

Oregon Public Health Week 2009 brought together more legislators, partners, advocates, students, staff, and members of the public on key public health issues than ever before. Based on the national theme, "Building the Foundation for a Healthy America," hundreds participated in a wide variety of activities including a statewide walk, a speaker's series, student photo contest, physical activity classes, healthy snack sampling, and a life jacket exchange.

Highlights of the week included nationally recognized speakers, among them Dr. Deborah Cohen, Senior Natural Scientist, RAND Corporation, and Dr. Lawrence Wallack, Dean of the School of Urban and Public Affairs, Portland State University, presented the latest information on obesity prevention, "weight control fairy tales" and "framing our message" – how to talk about public health in changing times. A "State Walk for the Public's Health" challenged state legislators to walk each day during Public Health Week, in order to collectively cross the entire state. Displays and exhibits were presented at the state capitol and the Portland State Office Building.



Public Health Student Photo Contest Winning Entries (Left to Right) 1st Place: Alexis Gomez, 16, Hillsboro, for *Confidence*. 2nd Place: Banlin Garcia, 16, Hillsboro, for *Are you my mother?* 3rd Place: Vishnu Rajan, 18, St. Helens, for *Demonstration of a Lost Mind*.

### Best Practices: Multnomah County's policy to be evaluated in national study -- from pg. 1

The health department's Chronic Disease Prevention Program's goal is to work collaboratively with restaurants to achieve compliance with the requirements, such as accommodating existing menu design schedules. The program formally notified all chain restaurants about the policy requirements and is responding to all requests for technical assistance by restaurants. The program is proactively reaching out to chain restaurants that have not been affected by menu labeling requirements adopted in other jurisdictions to offer help with the nutritional analysis of menu items as well as to address questions regarding the interpretation of the rules.

Multnomah County's menu labeling policy is being evaluated as a part of a national Robert Wood Johnson funded study of menu labeling which also includes King County Washington and New York City. The evaluation will rigorously examine how menu labeling is working and what the impacts are on customers in terms of how they use the information as well as on restaurants in terms of how menu offerings may change over time. For more information, contact Sonia Manhas, program manager, Multnomah County Health Department, Menu Labeling Initiative, [sonia.manhas@co.mullnomah.or.us](mailto:sonia.manhas@co.mullnomah.or.us)



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