

mechanisms by which biofactors may enhance mitochondrial function and reduce disease signs or symptoms (pages 136 and 141). Other research explores the use of tangerines to prevent vitamin A deficiency (page 130).

But simply knowing what foods are healthy is not enough. We need to increase access to healthy food and physical activity for all segments of society. The UC Berkeley Robert C. and Veronica Atkins Center for Weight and Health, a national leader in obesity prevention, has long worked with community partners to develop and evaluate obesity prevention strategies. Campus-based scientists at UC Berkeley and UC Davis have joined with county-based UCCE advisors to investigate and evaluate obesity issues in a variety of environments including childcare, school, after-school, community, work site and health care settings.

Research suggests that the solution to this health care crisis is a combination of educational and environmental interventions to promote healthy eating and active lifestyles.

For more information

UC Berkeley Robert C. and Veronica Atkins Center for Weight and Health
<http://cwh.berkeley.edu>

UC Davis Center for Health and Nutrition Research
<http://chnr.ucdavis.edu>

UC Healthy Families and Communities Strategic Initiative
<http://ucanr.org/sites/HFC>

USDA dietary guidelines
<http://detaryguidelines.gov>

Healthy Families and Communities Initiative

UCCE, the statewide extension arm of UC Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR), has launched the Healthy Families and Communities Initiative. The initiative addresses critical challenges faced by children, teens and young adults, including childhood obesity and science literacy. Childhood and adolescence are critical periods to develop healthy behaviors that can be sustained into adulthood (see box).

Known for their effective collaboration with diverse public and private partners, UCCE faculty and staff are in a favorable position to create and evaluate school and community interventions in counties across California.

These include school, nonformal educational settings and youth programs, such as 4-H. Interventions will serve as learning laboratories through which

UC research and education can strengthen efforts to reduce obesity and chronic disease, improving the health of all Californians.

UC Cooperative Extension focuses on youth health and science literacy

UC Cooperative Extension is launching a new effort to promote the physical, intellectual and emotional health of California's young people.

Called Healthy Families and Communities (HFC), this initiative addresses three critical challenges faced by children, teens and young adults in our state: childhood obesity, lack of science literacy and the need for positive development.

"Rather than concentrating on risky behaviors, the focus is on nurturing youth to help them reach their potential and strengthen their connections with the community," says Dave Campbell, initiative leader.

Nearly a third of California's school-aged children are overweight or obese, and the state has the unfortunate distinction of leading the nation in obesity-related health care costs. "To effectively address obesity, we need to wed traditional nutrition education outreach with youth and community development," Campbell says. "It's not enough to just educate individuals, you also need to address the social and built environment to see who has and who needs opportunities."

California's science literacy ranking is also dismal, with only Mississippi scoring worse. "Addressing this is absolutely critical," Campbell notes. "We need new scientists to retain our economic competitiveness, and the ability to recognize good science and think through problems systematically is also part of being a good citizen who can participate in the political discourse."

Alarming statistics jumped out during the panel's research. High school dropout rates are high, and about one-sixth of 16 to 24 year olds are out of school and out of work. This has high social costs and is a missed opportunity to train a skilled workforce to replace people who are about to retire.

HFC has solicited proposals for studies on the initiative's three strands. Funded projects will be carried out through campus-county research and extension partnerships that assess the effectiveness of individual and community change strategies. These projects will build on existing UC research on school wellness policies, garden-based learning, farm-to-school programs, after school and nonformal education, and youth development. "We're connecting our work to key issues in California," Campbell says.

— Robin Meadows



ilbusca/stockphoto

Finding solutions to the epidemic of obesity is a key goal of land-grant universities.