Why should you care?

A sedentary lifestyle contributes to being overweight and obese.
- Nationally, less than 16% of children bike or walk to school today compared to 42% in 1969.¹
- In 2007, 22% of New Mexico adults report not engaging in any physical activity. ²
- Of New Mexico high school students, 17% did not engage in any physical activity in 2007. ³

Obesity is a health threat in New Mexico.
- Nearly 61% of New Mexico adults are overweight or obese.⁴ The percentage of obese adults has doubled since 1990.⁵
- Over 24% of New Mexico high school students weigh too much.⁶
- In 2006, 25% of New Mexico 2- to 5-year-olds, who participate in federally funded nutrition programs weigh too much.⁷

The health and financial costs of being overweight and obese are devastating.
- Overweight and obesity can contribute to heart disease, diabetes, certain cancers and arthritis, as well as diminish quality of life.⁶
- New Mexico spends an estimated $324 million annually on adult medical expenditures attributable to obesity.⁷

What is the New Mexico Healthier Weight Council?

The New Mexico Healthier Weight Council is the first ever statewide collaboration of partners organized specifically to address overweight and obesity in New Mexico. The Council’s State Plan includes a vision that all New Mexicans value and enjoy optimal health in communities where it is easy to be active. The Community and Regional Planning Advisory Group of the Council is working to increase awareness among policymakers, health professionals and other key stakeholders on the impact of the built environment on physical activity. To access the New Mexico Plan to Promote Healthier Weight, visit: http://www.HealthierWeightNM.org

To become a member of the New Mexico Healthier Weight Council or invite members to speak on this topic in your community, call 505-222-8615.

Community and Regional Planning Advisory Group members:
- University of New Mexico Prevention Research Center
- New Mexico State University - Southern Area Health Education Center
- New Mexico Department of Health
- 1000 Friends of New Mexico
- New Mexico Department of Transportation - Safe Routes to Schools Program
- New Mexico Chapter of the American Planning Association

How Community Design Can Encourage Physical Activity

"It is unreasonable to expect that people will change their behavior easily when so many forces in the social, cultural and physical environment conspire against such change. If successful programs are to be developed to prevent disease and improve health, attention must be given not only to the behavior of individuals, but also to the environmental context within which people live."


Public health professionals, planners, engineers, elected officials and community advocates can work together to promote healthy active communities by encouraging active transportation such as walking and bicycling.

² New Mexico Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), 2007.
³ New Mexico Youth Risk & Resiliency Survey (YRRS), 2007.
⁵ New Mexico Department of Health, Family Health Bureau, data from Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), 2006.
⁶ New Mexico Department of Health Fact Sheet, “New Mexico’s Weight Problem” March 2008.

Cover Photos: Alliance for Active Living (women walking); New Mexico Safe Routes to School (children).
A New Mexico Department of Health staff member and a former Trustee from the Town of Mesilla approached the principal of Mesilla Elementary to initiate a Safe Routes to School program at school. As a result, in October 2007, students and parents participated for the first time in the International Walk and Roll to School Day. Since then monthly Walk and Roll to School Wednesdays have been held and has expanded to include a walking school bus and bike train. In March 2008, the Mesilla Safe Routes to School Workgroup was awarded New Mexico Safe Routes to School funding and is currently developing an action plan to expand the program and offer support to a neighboring middle school. The response from parents, teachers and students at Mesilla Elementary has been overwhelmingly supportive. [www.nmsaferoutes.com]

Great Streets Facility Plan
The Albuquerque Alliance for Active Living called for high-quality pedestrian improvements on the city’s streets. This led to the proposed Great Streets Facility Plan, which contains design standards for selected streets to improve safety, promote physical activity, build community and enhance economic development in neighborhoods. A Great Street should include crosswalks, wider sidewalks, thinner traffic lanes and other improvements. Updated zoning would allow buildings to be closer to the sidewalks, further supporting walkability. [www.greatstreetsabq.org]