

Physical Activity and Nutrition Among Alaskan Adults with Disabilities



Background

Regular physical activity and a healthy diet provide people with important health benefits. A number of factors affect a person's ability to make healthy choices, be physically active, eat a healthy diet, and achieve a healthy weight. This fact sheet examines the health disparities in relation to physical activity and nutrition for Alaskans with disabilities.

Methods

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is an annual health-related survey conducted by the Alaska Division of Public Health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) developed the BRFSS and maintains its ongoing use. The most current BRFSS data available are from 2013, which involved phone interviews with more than 4,500 Alaskan adults who answered questions about their health practices and daily living habits. According to the 2013 data, 23.3% of people ages 18 and older in Alaska reported having a disability.¹

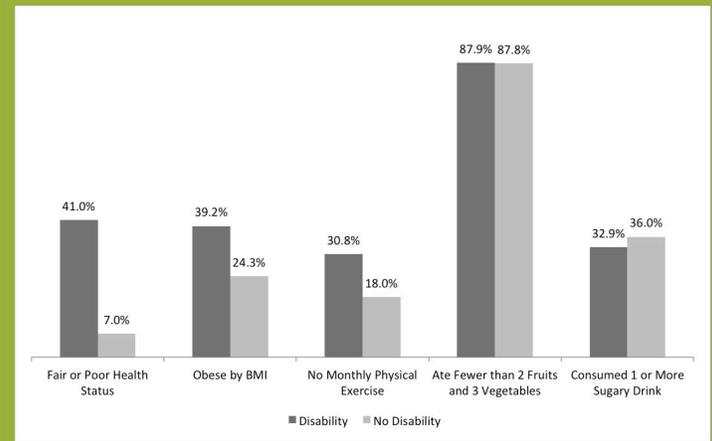
Results

Data from the 2013 BRFSS indicated 41.0% of Alaskans with disabilities self reported their general health status as fair or poor compared to 7.0% of Alaskans without disabilities. Further, 39.2% of Alaskans with disabilities identified themselves as obese based on body mass index (BMI), whereas 24.3% of Alaskans without disabilities indicated they were obese. Additionally, adults with disabilities were more likely (30.8%) than adults without disabilities (18.0%) not to exercise within the previous month. Nutritional habits revealed about 88% of Alaskan adults (both with or without disabilities) did not eat two servings of fruit and three servings of vegetables per day. Also, 32.9% of Alaskans with disabilities and 36.0% of Alaskans without disabilities consumed one or more servings of sugar-sweetened beverages and one or more non-diet soda daily.

Discussion

Alaskans with disabilities have a higher likelihood of being physically inactive and obese. Regular physical activity can improve the health and quality of life of Alaskans of all ages, regardless of the presence of a chronic disease or disability. Adults benefit from at

Physical Activity and Nutrition Data - AK BRFSS



least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity each week.² Despite the lack of disparity in regard to nutritional habits, there is room for improved health for all Alaskans as the patterns of consumption are not within the recommended guidelines. Alaskans with disabilities need access to information and support to make informed decisions about physical activity, nutritional habits, and weight goals.

Recommendations:

1. Identify and disseminate best practices to promote healthy activity, nutrition, and weight goals to disability providers.
2. Provide educational opportunities for disability providers on the health risks of obesity and poor nutrition and present steps to promote better health among people with disabilities.
3. Promote resources on physical activity and nutrition guidelines that are accessible and inclusive of people with disabilities.

References:

1. Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Center for Health Data and Statistics. BRFSS 2013.
2. Alaska Department of Health and Social Services and Alaska Native Health Tribal Consortium (2015). Healthy Alaskans 2020.