



CWHS

Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

Obesity and lack of physical activity are widely recognized as risk factors for poor health. They have been associated with an increase in a variety of chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease, hypertension, type-2 diabetes, and depression.^{1,2} Because of their importance to health, Healthy People 2010 objectives were defined targeting both obesity and physical activity.³ Women with disabilities may be more likely than other women to be overweight and less likely to engage in regular physical activity, due to the activity limitations and changes in mobility often associated with disability. Thus, women with a disability may face health threats associated with excess weight in addition to their disabling condition. This report uses data from the California Women's Health Survey (CWHS) to assess the prevalence of being overweight or obese and engaging in physical activity among women with and without a disability.

Women with a disability were identified on the 2007 CWHS by a "Yes" response to either of these two questions: (1) "Do you now have any health problem that requires you to use special equipment, such as a cane, a wheelchair, a special bed, or a special telephone?" or (2) "Are you limited in any way in any activities because of a physical, mental, or emotional problem?" Body mass index (BMI), a standard measure used to categorize weight, was calculated using a woman's self-reported height and weight. Women with a BMI of 25 to 29.99 were classified as being overweight and women with a BMI of 30 or greater were classified as obese.⁴

To assess physical activity, women were asked how many days in a usual week they did "moderate or vigorous activities for at least 10 minutes at a time, such as brisk walking, bicycling, vacuuming, gardening, or anything else that causes some increase in breathing or heart rate." Women who responded "none" to this question were classified as engaging in no regular physical activity. Responses were weighted in these analyses by age and race/ethnicity to reflect the 2000 California adult female population.

In 2007, 22.3 percent of CWHS respondents reported having a disability. Similar percentages of women with and without a disability were overweight (27.5 percent and 26.6 percent, respectively; see Figure 1). However, there was a considerable difference in prevalence of obesity between women with a disability (32.8 percent) and women with no disability (20.9 percent; $p < 0.0001$). Similarly, twice as many women with a disability reported not engaging in regular physical activity (16.8 percent) than those without disability (8.5 percent; $p < 0.0001$).

The observed association between obesity, physical activity, and disability was made up of complex interrelationships. While a causal relationship between disability and obesity cannot be determined with these data, the results indicate a strong association that needs to be explored. Disability can lead to obesity by affecting a woman's mobility and energy, consequently affecting the amount of physical activity in which she can engage. Conversely, obesity can cause disability, since it may lead to activity limitations.

Overweight, Obesity and Lack of Physical Activity Among California Women With a Disability, 2007

California Department of Public Health
Epidemiology and Prevention for Injury Control (EPIC) Branch
Living Healthy With a Disability Program

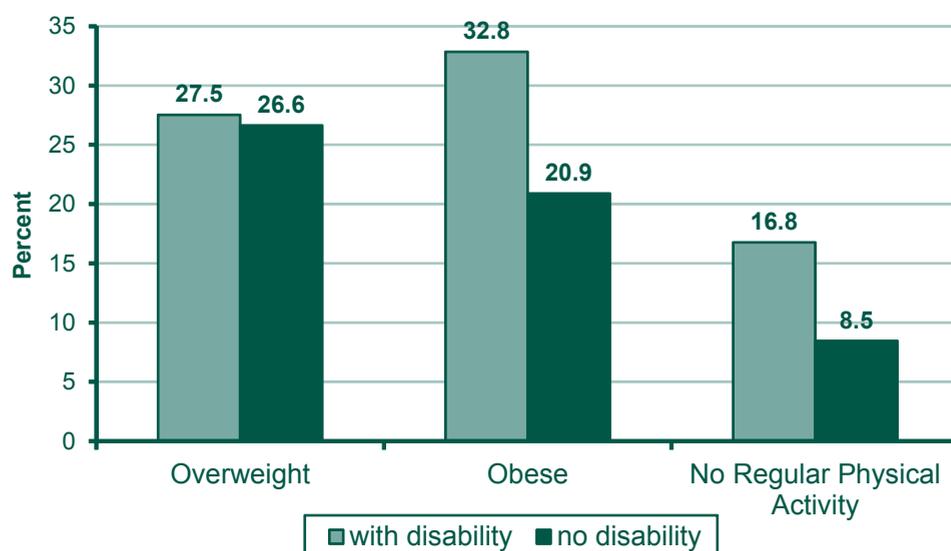
Public Health Message:

One in three women with a disability is obese and one in six does not participate in any regular physical activity. Women with a disability are a vulnerable population at risk for health problems due to excess weight. Health promotion activities such as weight control and exercise options should be available, accessible, and affordable to women with disabilities.⁵

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Figure 1 **Overweight, Obesity and Lack of Physical Activity Among California Women, by Disability Status, 2007**



Source: California Women's Health Survey, 2007

- 1 The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity. Overweight and Obesity Web site. <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/index.htm>. Accessed June 2008.
- 2 The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity. Physical Activity for a Health Weight Web site. http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/healthyweight/physical_activity/index.htm. Accessed June 2008.
- 3 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Healthy People 2010. Understanding and Improving Health*. 2nd ed. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, November 2000.
- 4 The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity. Assessing your Weight Web site. <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/healthyweight/assessing/index.htm>.
- 5 Rimmer JH, Riley B, Wang E, Rauworth A, Jurkowski J. Physical activity participation among persons with disabilities: barriers and facilitators. *Am J Prev Med*. 2004;26(5):419-25.

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