

## **Q&A: William J. Clinton Foundation/American Heart Association Childhood Obesity Prevention Initiative**

**Q: Why have the Clinton Foundation and the American Heart Association formed a relationship?**

**A:** The American Heart Association and former President Clinton are concerned that the growing rate of obesity is putting the health of our nation's children at risk. The increase in obesity is causing more and more children to have high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and type II diabetes – conditions found mainly in adults in the past.

The AHA and Clinton Foundation share common priorities and interests in reaching children and other stakeholders with important messages on preventing childhood obesity and creating a healthier generation of children. Both organizations have unique competencies through which they can address these issues and believe that by forming an alliance they can accomplish more than they could separately.

**Q: Why have the Clinton Foundation and the American Heart Association chosen to focus on Childhood Obesity prevention and the promotion of healthier lifestyles among youth?**

**A:** Former President Clinton recognizes that today's children are tomorrow's future. The American Heart

Association's mission is to reduce disability and death from cardiovascular diseases and stroke. Research shows that obesity among children today contributes to their increased risk for heart disease and stroke as they mature. By working together, the Clinton Foundation and the American Heart Association can make a significant impact to stop the rise of childhood obesity and encourage healthier lifestyles in children. In doing so, today's children can live longer, healthier lives.

**Q: What is the goal of this alliance?**

**A:** The goal of the Clinton-American Heart Association alliance is to stop the increasing prevalence of childhood obesity in the United States by 2010. This is a long term commitment where the two organizations plan to work together closely over the next 10 years to address the issues that contribute to childhood obesity and influence children's lifestyles. The alliance will create solutions that inspire all young Americans to develop life-long healthy habits.

**Q: How does the Clinton-American Heart Association alliance plan to accomplish stopping the growth of childhood obesity?**

**A:** The alliance will tackle this issue by speaking to a variety of audiences and focusing on several key areas that have a major impact on the lifestyles and behaviors of children: consumers, industry, healthcare providers, schools and the media. This is not a short-term campaign, but a long-term commitment.

To reach consumers, the alliance will launch a "for kids, by kids" movement to mobilize kids to take charge of their own health and lead healthier lives. Tools will be developed for parents to incorporate heart-healthy habits into their daily routines. The alliance will work with the food and fitness industry to make changes that encourage healthier eating and more physical activity. Working with healthcare providers, the alliance will create tools that better recognize, prevent and treat obesity in children. The alliance will encourage more healthy food options in schools and increase physical activity opportunities for children during and after school. The alliance's public education campaign will

encourage healthy lifestyles and increase the understanding of the benefits of good nutrition and physical activity.

**Q: Who is the primary target audience for the awareness component of the initiative?**

**A:** The American Heart Association and the Clinton Foundation both strongly feel that the issue of childhood obesity prevention must be addressed at many levels. Therefore, we are focusing on several key audiences that we feel will have the most impact on changing the environment and creating behavior change – consumers, industry (food/restaurant and fitness), schools, health care providers, the entertainment industry and the media.

**Q: When will the Clinton Foundation and the American Heart Association announce additional details of the childhood obesity prevention initiative?**

**A:** Over the last few months, we have worked together to develop possible strategies and an overall framework for addressing this initiative. More information on specific components of the initiative will be announced over the course of the next year, as we finalize plans. Some activities will include the initial convening of industry, school leaders and media, the launch of the “for kids, by kids” campaign, and recognition of outstanding organizations and companies that have had a substantial impact on childhood obesity prevention.

**Q: Some are questioning how serious a health risk obesity is. What is your response?**

**A:** The upward trends in both adult and childhood obesity are especially alarming. These growing rates in the prevalence of obesity are putting Americans – young and old – at greater risk for heart disease, making this a top priority for the association and for the nation as a whole. The facts remain:

- Most overweight children have at least one major risk factor for cardiovascular disease such as elevated cholesterol, insulin or blood pressure.
- Overweight children and adolescents have an approximately 70 percent chance of becoming overweight adults – increasing their risk for heart disease.
- People who are obese or overweight have a lower life expectancy.
- Obesity-related annual hospital costs for children more than tripled between 1979 and 1999.
- Economic costs to U.S. businesses represent about 5 percent of total medical care costs.
- Studies have shown that as BMI increases, so do the number of sick days, medical claims and health care costs.

**Q: Will the American Heart Association and President Clinton involve other partners in this campaign?**

**A:** Yes, other partners will be critical to the success of this campaign. The alliance will engage partners from the public, private and non-profit sectors to help reach the alliance’s goals. The food industry, healthcare providers, schools, media and the entertainment industry will be instrumental in helping to develop solutions.