

# HEALTH

## Fighting Fat Goes High Tech

### Devices monitor eating, exercise

(AP) -- The fight against fat is going high-tech. To get an inside look at eating and exercise habits, scientists are developing wearable wireless sensors to monitor overweight and obese people as they go about their daily lives.

The experimental devices are designed to keep track of how many minutes they work out, how much food they consume and even whether they are at a fast-food joint when they should be in the park. The goal is to cut down on self-reported answers that often cover up what's really happening.

In a lab in this Los Angeles suburb, two overweight teenagers help test the devices by taking turns sitting, standing, lying down, running on a treadmill and playing Wii. As music thumps in the background, wireless sensors on their chests record their heart rates, stress levels

and amount of physical activity. The information is sent to a cell phone.

"I can't feel my legs," 15-year-old Amorette Castillo groans after her second treadmill run.

Traditional weight-loss interventions rely mainly on people's memory of what they ate for dinner and how many minutes they worked out. But researchers have long known that method can be unreliable since people often forget details or lie.

The new devices are being designed in labs or created with off-the-shelf parts. Some similar instruments are already on the market, including a model that tracks calories burned by measuring motion, sweat and heat with armbands.

But the devices in development aim to be more sophisticated by featuring more precise electronics and sometimes even video cameras. Many emerging systems also strive to provide instant feedback and personalized treatment for wearers.

At the University of Southern



Amorette Castillo, 15 (right) is fitted with a wireless sensor to gather vital signs and a cell phone for gathering data, in an experiment to keep track of eating and exercise habits.

California lab, the teens alternated between being sedentary and active as researchers resolved the tech-

nical bugs. Later this year, some will wear the body sensors at home on weekends. If they get too lazy, they

will get pinged with a text message.

"We'll be able to know real-time if they're inactive, if they're active," said Donna Spruijt-Metz, a USC child obesity expert in charge of the project.

The devices are made possible by advances in technology such as accelerometers that can measure the duration and intensity of a workout. They also use Bluetooth-enabled cell phones that can take pictures of meals and send information back.

Will all this wizardry lead to a slimmer society? Scientists say there's reason to hope. Getting an accurate picture of what people eat and how often they move around will help researchers develop personalized weight-loss advice.

Obesity is epidemic in the United States with two-thirds of adults either overweight or obese. It's a major health concern for children and adolescents, who are at higher risk for high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes as they grow older.

## HEALTH WATCH

**Powerful Tools For Caregivers** -- 6-week educational series designed to help family caregivers take care of themselves while caring for relatives or friends with chronic illness. Class size is limited, and registration is required. Call 503-413-8018.

**Leg Alert Screening** -- Check for peripheral arterial disease with this safe, simple screening using ankle and arm blood pressure. The fee is \$40. To schedule an appointment, call 503-251-6137.

**Smoke-Free Support Group** -- Meets Mondays, 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. For information, call 503-256-4000.

**Maternity Water Workout** -- Helping new moms regain muscle tone, strength, and flexibility, all in the support and freedom of the water. Call 503-256-4000 for more information.

**Senior Aerobics** -- A low-impact workout geared specifically toward seniors. Call 503-449-0783 for current schedule.

**Osteoporosis Screening** -- An ultrasound bone density screening with personalized education; fee \$30. To schedule an appointment, call 503-261-6611.

**Managing Chronic Hepatitis C** -- Third Wednesday of each month at 5 p.m. The informative session is led by a registered nurse to help you manage side effects of medications and dosage preparations and administration; doctor referral required. To register, call 503-251-6313.

**Better Breathers** -- An asthma educational support group meets on the 1st Tuesday of the month from 1:15 p.m. to 2:45 p.m. at Adventist Medical Center. For information, call 503-251-6830.

**Stroke Alert Screening** -- Check your carotid arteries with a painless ultrasound to assess your risk. Fee \$40. To schedule a screening, call 503-251-6137.

## Health Care for Kids State program fully expanded



Ted Kulongoski

Gov. Ted Kulongoski recently announced that more than 20,000 Oregon children now have access to health care because of the Healthy Kids Plan passed during the 2009 legislative session.

Since July, the Department of Human Services has been enrolling eligible children in the Healthy Kids Plan. Today's enrollment numbers show that the state is on schedule to meet its goal of enrolling 80,000 uninsured children by the end of 2010. By insuring 80,000 children, 95 percent of all Oregon children will have health insurance.

Healthy Kids provides several options for families to obtain health insurance for their children, depending on income level.

**No Cost:** The plan provides free coverage through the Oregon Health Plan for children in families with incomes up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level (or \$44,100 for a family of four).

**Low-Cost:** The program offers a cost-share model to assist Oregon's middle-class families earning too much to qualify for the Oregon Health Plan, but too little to purchase private insurance on their own. On a sliding scale, these families share the cost with the state or can receive a subsidy to help pay for their child's coverage through an employer sponsored insurance plan.

**Full Cost:** For children in families with incomes above 300 percent of the federal poverty level (or \$66,000 for a family of four), the program provides access to a new state-sponsored private insurance plan called Healthy KidsConnect, which opened for enrollment with the New Year. These families pay the full premium.

"Many parents are struggling in this difficult economy. One thing they don't have to worry about is how to get their children the health care they need," said Kulongoski. "I encourage every parent with uninsured children to apply for Healthy Kids today."

Parents can learn more about Healthy Kids and apply online at [oregonhealthykids.gov](http://oregonhealthykids.gov) or by calling 1-877-314-5678.

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