

# Obesity: A growing problem among Fil-Ams

by JOSEPH PIMENTEL  
AJP/Press

LOS ANGELES—CHILDHOOD obesity is rising in the Asian American community and experts say that Filipino Americans are more inclined to be at-risk than the rest of the demographic.

"If you think about the [Filipino] diet and activity level that would probably explain why this, as a group, has an increase level of being overweight," said Dr. Jyu-Lin Chen, RN, and Associate Professor at UCSF School of Public Nursing during the 5th Biennial Childhood Obesity Conference.

According to experts, the percentage of Asian American children in California who are at risk of obesity has risen faster than the rest of the population over the past two years. Nearly 11 percent of California children who are overweight are Asian or Pacific Islander.

In many Asian countries, however, there is a stereotype that being overweight is a sign of good fortune and health. It is also considered a sign of social class.

But experts said the implications especially for children being overweight are far reaching.

"The risks are considerable," said Dr. May Wang, Associate Professor of the UCLA School of Public Health. "We know that childhood obesity is related to diabetes,

heart disease, hypertension and we're seeing it at a younger and younger age so it's really important to start developing intervention programs that are culturally appropriate for Asian Americans."

Wang said there is research that suggests that health conditions such as type 2 diabetes may develop at lower levels of fatness among Asians. One national study found that the prevalence of type 2 diabetes is 60 percent higher in Asian Americans than in non-Hispanic Caucasians, she added.

A 2004 University of California San Diego (UCSD) Filipino Women's Health Study found that Filipino women had over three times the prevalence of type 2 diabetes than white women of similar age.

UCLA Associate Professor Gilbert Gee said that it is common knowledge that the rate of obesity in the Filipino American community is high.

Gee said that if the parents are overweight, there's a strong likelihood the children are too.

"Kids tend to eat what their parents provide for them," said Gee.

Experts said in addition to poor eating habits, other factors as to why more Asian American children are at risk of being obese

is that children tend to stay in front of the computer more and Asian parents are less likely to encourage their children to participate in sporting activity.

Based on the US Department of Education, only 39 percent of tenth-grade Asian boys participated in after-school sports, the lowest participation rate of any ethnic group. Similarly, only 34 percent of tenth-grade Asian girls participated in sports, second only to Hispanic girls at 32 percent.

"We know that Asian parents want their children to focus on their studies," said Chen. "But there's research that suggests being active in sports can stimulate the brain so it's actually better if kids join sporting activities."

Experts say that it's important for the public to recognize that this is an issue affecting children all over the world and Asians are definitely not immune from it.

Gail Kong, president and executive director of the Asian Pacific Fund, echoed the importance of the findings at the obesity conference.

"We want to help Asian parents learn about the serious health problems their children will face if they don't change some of their daily habits," she said. ■

# Did Asian Americans vote for Obama?

by VERONICA UY  
Inquirer.net

It's been more than six months since the United States put the first black American president in the White House, and Asian Americans across the US were overwhelmingly for President Barack Obama.

In its multilingual exit poll, the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (Aaldef) found that Asian Americans voted for Barack Obama by a 3-to-1 margin, with a majority registered as Democrats.

The detailed results of the polls, which were released Monday, noted that over 76 percent of Asian Americans polled voted for Barack Obama for President, with 23 percent supporting John McCain.

In 30 of the 45 congressional districts where the exit poll was conducted, most of this ethnic group supported Demo-

cratic candidates. Among Asian Americans polled, more than half (58 percent) were registered Democrats, 13 percent were registered Republicans, and 26 percent were not enrolled in any political party.

Aaldef executive director Margaret Fung said that "in the historic 2008 Presidential election, Asian American voters were engaged in the political process like never before."

She said the Aaldef exit poll offers unique insights into the Asian American electorate normally overlooked in mainstream polls.

Asian Americans "will continue to have growing influence on our nation's political landscape," she said.

nia, Virginia, Maryland, Michigan, Illinois, Louisiana, Texas, Nevada, and Washington, DC. ■

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