



### High BMI Linked to Proximity to Convenience Stores

ScienceDaily (July 5, 2010) — Researchers at the University at Buffalo conducting a neighborhood-scaled exploratory study that tested the association between the food environment, the built environment and women's body mass index (BMI) have found that women with homes closer to a supermarket, relative to a convenience store, had lower BMIs, and that the greater the number of restaurants within a five minute walk of a woman's home, the higher her BMI.

"In particular, three findings are significant," says Raja.

"First, a greater number of restaurants within a five-minute walk of a subject's house was associated with a greater BMI, holding other factors constant," she says.

"Second," she says, "on average, women who live within relative proximity to supermarkets and grocery stores (as opposed to convenience stores) tend to have lower BMIs.

"Third, and perhaps most important," Raja says, "the interaction of the food environment and the built environment in a neighborhood carries significant consequences for obesity. For example, a diverse land-use mix, while beneficial for promoting physical activity, is tied to a net increase in BMI when that land is dominated by restaurants."

She says future research on the built environment and health must take into account the role of the food environment on women's health, and the study offers suggestions for how food environments may be improved using planning strategies.

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### Bicycling, Brisk Walking Help Women Control Weight; Researchers Call for More Bike-Friendly Environments to Combat Obesity

ScienceDaily (July 4, 2010) — Premenopausal women who make even small increases in the amount of time they spend bicycling or walking briskly every day decrease their risk of gaining weight, according to a new study by researchers from the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH).

For premenopausal women of any weight, riding a bicycle was effective in helping to maintain weight, and overweight and obese women appeared to benefit the most. The researchers found that among women who did not originally bicycle in 1989 but bicycled in 2005, even a small increase in bicycling time -- as little as five minutes each day -- helped to control weight. Among the walkers who had increased their daily activity by an average of 30 min/day over the years, only those who walked briskly ( $\geq 3$  mph) were able to control their weight. Walking slowly ( $< 3$  mph) had no effect.

The results come from an examination of 18,414 premenopausal women, free from chronic diseases such as diabetes, cancer, or cardiovascular disease, participating in the Brigham and Women's Hospital-based Nurses' Health Study II. This is an ongoing study in which participants respond to a questionnaire about their medical history, lifestyle and health-related behaviors every two years. In 1989 and 2005, participants reported on time spent engaging the previous year in various recreational activities.

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### Simple Two-Question Survey Can Better Identify Hungry Children

ScienceDaily (July 1, 2010) — Asking parents just two simple screening questions could help health care providers and social workers to easily and quickly identify families whose young children are suffering from hunger, enabling early interventions that could prevent serious health consequences, according to a new study led by University of Maryland School of Medicine researchers. The study, published July 1 in the journal *Pediatrics*, analyzed data gathered from more than 30,000 families nationwide, about a quarter of whom suffered from hunger.

The researchers examined whether the time-consuming, 18-question Household Food Security Survey provided by the federal government could be shortened and still be effective in identifying hungry families. They found that just the first two statements, with which families were asked to agree or disagree, were key: "Within the past 12 months we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more;" and "Within the past 12 months the food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more."

The researchers found that 92.5 percent of the hungry families answered "yes" to the first question, and 81.9 percent of the families answered yes to the second, meaning that positive answers to those questions alone could accurately identify most families affected by hunger.

Such an efficient screening test can save time and get help to more hungry families faster, according to lead author Erin Hager, Ph.D., assistant professor of pediatrics at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. "This paper is the evidence that it works," Dr. Hager says. "Now, this can immediately be used by any social service agency or any clinic to more quickly get hungry children connected with the assistance they need to stay nourished, healthy and developmentally on track."

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