



Frequently Asked Questions Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation

May 17, 2010

Q: What specific initiative is the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation announcing today?

A: Food manufacturing companies that are members of the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation have pledged to reduce 1.5 trillion calories by the end of 2015. Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation members intend to sustain this decrease in subsequent years. As an interim goal, they will seek to reduce calories by 1 trillion by the end of 2012. These calorie reductions are in comparison with what was available in the marketplace in 2008.

We are also announcing that we have signed an agreement with the Partnership for a Healthier America, for which First Lady Michelle Obama serves as honorary chair. The Partnership for a Healthier America is an independent, non-partisan organization that is working to mobilize action around the specific goals of the Let's Move! campaign to curb child obesity within a generation.

The goals of reduced calorie consumption and increased physical activity are key to arresting the problem of obesity. They address the dual problem of Americans consuming too many calories, and expending too few calories through physical activity. Many cite this "energy gap" as the principal cause of increasing obesity.

Q: How will the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation measure the results of this initiative? How will they make these results transparent?

Under the terms of the agreement with the Partnership for a Healthier America, the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation (HWCF) will report annually to the Partnership on the progress we are making toward this pledge.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, also will support a rigorous, independent evaluation of how the Healthy Weight Commitment

Foundation's efforts to reduce calories in the marketplace affect calories consumed by children and adolescents. RWJF will publicly report on its findings.

Q: How are Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation companies going about helping consumers reduce calories in the food they choose?

A: Manufacturing company members will pursue their calorie-reduction goals by developing and introducing lower-calorie options, changing recipes where possible to lower the calorie content of current products, or reducing portion sizes of existing single-serve products.

Q: What is the potential impact of these initiatives?

A: If all food suppliers meet the same goals as Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation member companies, the food industry would give Americans the options they need to subtract half of the projected excess calories they consume each day. If, as well, consumers increase their physical activity to expend a comparable number of calories each day, the nation could close the energy gap, reversing the trend in obesity.

This is based on the assessment of many experts that most weight gain can be eliminated with an average reduction of 100 calories per person, per day, through reduced calorie consumption and increased physical activity. (This energy gap varies by age. For children for example, experts say the gap is 11-30 calories a day.)

Q: How was the 1.5 trillion calorie reduction goal established?

A: We looked at the cause of the obesity problem, and what is necessary to get it under control. When one multiplies an average 100-calorie per day energy gap by 300 million Americans, it comes to roughly 11 trillion calories a year. In the opinion of many experts, weight reduction is best pursued in a balanced manner (including both reduced calorie intake and increased physical activity to burn calories). Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation is leading the effort to help Americans reduce the expenditure side by half of the targeted 11 trillion, or roughly 5.5 trillion calories a year.

When considering what percentage of total calories Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation members should seek to reduce, we reviewed sales figures monitored by data-collection agencies. Approximately 20-25 percent of the volume of the American food supply is provided by Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation members (with the rest provided by competing food manufacturers and restaurants.) That proportion of the necessary U.S. calorie reduction comes to approximately 1.5 trillion calories.

Q: How many calories do the companies aim at helping consumers reduce on an annual basis between now and 2015, and between now and 2012?

A: An average of 200 billion calories per year, from levels consumed in 2008, for a total of 1 trillion calories from 2008-2012 and 1.5 trillion by 2015. Of course, since this is an average, the total for any year could be over or under that amount.

Q: What is each company doing?

A: The goal of each company is highly confidential, as it involves highly confidential information about new products and plans. That is why the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation is coordinating this initiative. HWCF can show the overall result without revealing any confidential plans. Under the terms of the agreement with the Partnership for a Healthier America, the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation (HWCF) will report annually to the Partnership on the progress that we are making toward this pledge.

Q: What is the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation?

A: A first-of-its-kind coalition of more than 80 retailers, food and beverage manufacturers, sporting goods and insurance companies, trade associations, and nonprofit organizations aimed at doing our part to help families reduce obesity, especially childhood obesity. The Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation has been working intensively to design initiatives that will assist American families in building habits for active healthier living into their daily lives.

Q: How does the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation try to reduce obesity?

A: Like the First Lady and her “Let’s Move” initiative, which the Foundation strongly supports, the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation recognizes the importance of energy balance – reducing the calories people consume and increasing the calories they burn through physical activity – fewer calories in and increased calories out. The Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation focuses its efforts on three critical areas where people spend much of their time:

- In the marketplace, to provide consumers with lower-calorie food options and healthier food options, and nutrition information.
- In schools, to support nutrition and physical activity education.
- In the workplace, to help member corporations’ employees develop and maintain a more active, healthier lifestyle.

Q: What other initiatives is the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation pursuing?

- Partnership in websites with Discovery Education and Meredith Media Company, offering free resources to help parents and teachers address child obesity.
- Partnership in a website with the National Business Group on Health, offering free resources to help small/midsized firms provide employee wellness programs.

- Educational initiatives that promote nutrition and a healthier lifestyle – including providing more information on calories, nutrition and energy balance to consumers, such as offering more than 10,000 healthier recipes on websites and promoting active, healthier living in all media types.
- Promoting healthier eating and physical activity to the 1 million domestic employees of member companies.
- Participating in the Healthy Schools Partnership, which promotes nutrition and physical activity education in the schools.

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