

## Why is urgent action required? fact sheet

The obesity epidemic needs to be tackled urgently because the health, social and economic consequences are extremely serious.

### The individual cost

Overweight and obesity increases the risk of a range of serious conditions, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, asthma, gallbladder disease, depression and social isolation, stroke, osteo-arthritis, back problems, infertility and some cancers. Excess weight gain in childhood and adolescence is now known to lead to overweight and obesity in adulthood, chronic diseases (such as heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, some forms of cancer) and early mortality. For overweight adolescents with type 2 diabetes, 10 per cent are likely to develop renal failure in adulthood and require life-long dialysis treatment.

### The social and economic cost

The social and economic consequences of this epidemic are also extremely serious. In 2005 the total financial cost for obesity alone in Australia was estimated to be \$3.7 billion. This did not include the costs related to those who are overweight but not obese<sup>(8)</sup>. The personal and community cost impacts are already significant and rising dramatically. The total cost of obesity in Australia in 2005 was estimated at \$21 billion, including \$3.8 billion in financial costs and \$17.2 billion in the cost of lost wellbeing<sup>(8)</sup>.

This increased burden of disease will dramatically affect individuals, families, the economy and all aspects of society if we do not take action now.

### The good news

The overweight and obesity epidemic is entirely preventable. Evidence has shown the clear link between overweight and obesity, poor diet and lack of physical activity. Research shows that improving diet and increasing physical activity can help prevent, manage and treat obesity, and can help everyone live longer and enjoy better health.

By understanding the importance of eating well and being active, and integrating these behaviours into our daily lifestyle, we can help reduce this huge risk to our future and enjoy a healthier, longer and happier lifestyle. So check out the Eat Well Be Active website and see how you can start making positive changes – after all, it's your life, so make the most of it!

(8) Access Economics (2006) *The economic costs of obesity*. Diabetes Australia, October 2006, Canberra.