

# POTENTIAL IMPACT OF MENU LABELING OF FAST FOODS IN CALIFORNIA

## FACT SHEET

### WHAT

*Potential Impact of Menu Labeling of Fast Foods in California*, a white paper released today, shows that posting calorie information on menu boards at fast-food restaurants could help California adults shed over two pounds a year and allow the state to drop a cumulative 40 million pounds annually.

### WHY

California, like the rest of the nation, is facing an obesity crisis. This epidemic did not occur overnight. With Californians gaining an average of one pound each year, now over 60% of Californians are either overweight or obese. This analysis points to a no-cost solution to help reverse this alarming trend.

### WHEN

This report is based on data from a peer-reviewed 2008 study conducted at New York City Subway restaurants and a 2007 consumer survey of Californians age 16-64.

### HOW

To understand the range of possible consumption and weight outcomes of providing calorie information on menu boards, this analysis explores five scenarios based on different assumptions about the percentage of people who frequent fast-food restaurants and see calorie information. Conservatively, the analysis suggests that patrons of fast-food restaurants will consume 52 calories less when provided with basic calorie information on menu boards. Using data that shows California adults eat at fast food restaurants an average of 3.44 times a week, the University of California Center for Weight and Health calculates that menu labeling could reduce the average adult fast-food patron's consumption by 9,302 calories per year, preventing the equivalent of 2.7 pounds of weight gain per person. If 80% of patrons see the information, menu labeling could result in an overall reduction of 40 million pounds annually for the entire state.

### KEY FINDINGS

- The 82% of Californians who regularly eat at fast-food restaurants do so an average of 3.4 times per week.
- Consumers purchase fast-food meals with 52 fewer calories when calorie information is posted on menu boards.
- Menu labeling could prevent 2.7 pounds of weight gain for the average California adult fast-food consumer.
- Conservatively, if only 80 percent of California's 23 million adults who eat at fast-food restaurants see the calorie information, the state would see an annual drop of 40 million pounds.

$$\frac{3.44 \text{ visits/week} \times 52 \text{ weeks/year} \times 52 \text{ calorie reduction/visit}}{3,500 \text{ calories in one pound}} = 2.7 \text{ pounds}$$

### WHO

The analysis was conducted by the University of California Dr. Robert C. and Veronica Atkins Center for Weight and Health in cooperation with the California Center for Public Health Advocacy.