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Dr. Frank Meza, center wearing tie, presented daunting statistics to more than 30 members during the first TCU- and Kaiser Permanente-sponsored health fair. TCU vice president Michael Winston, standing, third from right, partnered with Kaiser Permanente to offer monthly sessions of invigorating health lessons.

## TCU members get 'tough talk' about importance of exercise

- [Don't miss a word of this:](#) Transcript of Dr. Frank Meza's complete discussion

By LAURA KLOTH  
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Members of the Metro's Transportation Communications Union (TCU) listened to an informative discussion about how chronic illness could be prevented or mitigated by exercising.

Dr. Frank Meza, assistant director of Kaiser's Los Angeles Medical Center, presented daunting statistics to more than 30 members during the first TCU- and Kaiser Permanente-sponsored health fair this month.

He said 63 percent of Americans are now overweight and 32 percent suffer from high blood pressure, and that children and pets are following the same unhealthy trends.

"Here's the tragedy," Meza said. "Your children today will not live as long as you do. We already know that. This is the first time in five generations this is going to happen in the United States.

"It's almost too late already. It's kind of sad. We're almost thinking of that next group behind them because this group is already too far gone," referring to children who can't climb trees or run 100 yards.

## Quote

Exercise prevents  
depression,

cancer, diabetes, Alzheimer's, dementia. It leads to increased energy and improved sleep. You name it. The list is getting bigger and bigger.

Unquote

See [transcript](#)



Meza says researchers believe the obesity trends began in the mid-1960s when Americans first began trading balanced meals for frozen TV dinners and going to fast-food restaurants. The obesity rates continued to climb into the '90s as more chronic diseases began to spring up such as hypertension, diabetes and heart disease, particularly among Latinos and African-Americans.

He said the research has shown that the sources of these chronic illnesses center on lack of exercise, poor nutrition and smoking. And while medicine can prolong the lives of those with chronic conditions, the only prevention is exercise.

Meza encouraged his audience to exercise five times a week, about 30 minutes a day, and he suggested hiring a personal trainer even for one session to learn how to exercise properly without using gym equipment.

The good news, he noted, is that most adults can begin an exercise program at any point in their lives. He gave many instances where chronic illness is alleviated or eliminated after a patient begins to exercise.

Those who attended the health fair asked about ways to exercise, and all received a certificate of completion from Kaiser.

Michael Winston, Metro storekeeper and TCU vice president, said the health fair took some time to coordinate, but it was well worth the effort. He said, "This is the first step toward a monthly session for our members to participate ... to have preventive methods toward living healthier and eating healthier."

Debbie Smith-Walker, labor account manager for Kaiser, said more employers are providing health fairs to educate employees.

The next topic, "Women's Health – Heart Disease," will be held March 18 for TCU employees and Kaiser members.