

Norwalk Student Body Mass Index Report

2012-2013 Executive Summary

Norwalk Health Department
Norwalk Public Schools
Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity
June 2014

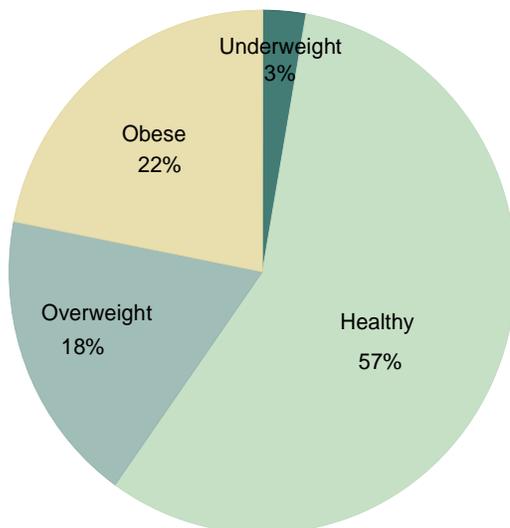


As part of its work to measure the community's health, the Norwalk Health Department has partnered with Norwalk Public Schools to monitor rates and trends of childhood obesity. The Health Department uses height and weight information from students' Health Assessment Records and measurements taken by school nurses to calculate body mass index (BMI), a proxy measure for body fat that is normally used for obesity surveillance. In collaboration with the Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity, the Health Department and Norwalk Public Schools use the BMI information to calculate age- and gender-standardized percentiles and measure body weight status of Norwalk children. By tracking these measurements over time, the Health Department can evaluate community progress in the fight against childhood obesity.

Most recent data for the 2012-2013 school year suggests several important observations. Among all students in the database (kindergarteners, third, sixth, and ninth graders), 40% were overweight or obese, including 22% obese, as seen in the graph on this page. These rates were often higher

(continued on next page)

Norwalk School District Body Weight Status, 2012
Kindergarten, 3rd, 6th, and 9th Grades



Key Findings

- In total, 40% of children in the database were overweight or obese in 2012-2013. In many cases, these rates were higher than state and national averages.
- Unfortunately, many children had already reached an unhealthy weight in elementary school.
- Hispanic children and Black children were at higher risk of obesity than White children.
- Trends in overweight and obesity remained relatively consistent over time, with a few exceptions. A child's weight status in kindergarten is highly predictive of his/her weight status in middle and high school.

Authors

Tatiana Andreyeva, PhD
Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity

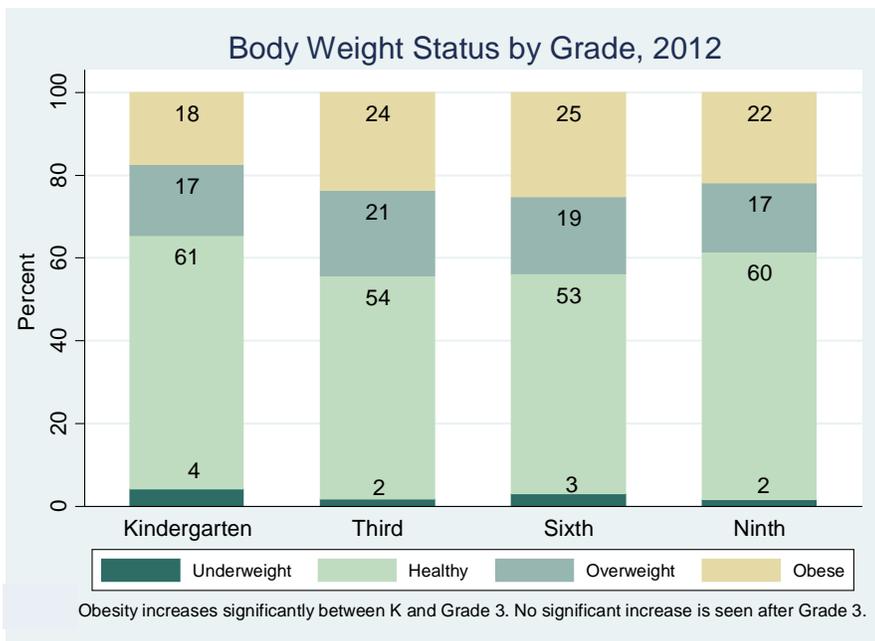
Grace Vetter, MA, RN, NCSN
Norwalk Public Schools

Theresa Argondezzi, MPH, CHES &
Santina Galbo, MS, CHES
Norwalk Health Department

than state and national averages. Significant differences in the prevalence of overweight and obesity existed between kindergartners (35%) and students in Grade 3 (45%), Grade 6 (44%), and through high school (39%). Most of the excessive weight gain occurred in elementary school, between kindergarten and third grade. Third grade measurements only began being taken in 2011, so this important finding requires further study. Also, trend data are not yet available for this group of students.

As seen throughout the U.S., Black and Hispanic children are often at higher risk of unhealthy weight than White children. In kindergarten, Hispanic children had significantly higher rates of overweight and obesity (43%) than White (29%) and Black children (31%). By Grade 3, rates of overweight and obesity in Black children caught up to those in Hispanic children (43% and 54%), and surpassed them by Grade 9 (43% vs. 41%). In contrast, rates of overweight and obesity for White children remained 30-34% throughout grades.

Over time, changes in overweight and obesity rates in each grade remained consistent, with a few exceptions. A child's weight status in kindergarten was highly predictive of his/her weight status in later grades.



Take Small Steps Today for a Healthier Tomorrow

- **Eat more fruits and vegetables every day.** Make sure at least half your plate is filled with fruits or vegetables at every meal. Dietary guidelines for adults and children can be found at www.ChooseMyPlate.gov.
- **Get moving every day.** Children should get at least 1 hour of active play most days and limit screen time—that's time in front of a TV, computer screen, or other electronic device. For more information about how to get active, see Let's Move! at <http://www.letsmove.gov/>.
- **Eliminate or cut down sugary drinks.** Choose water or low-fat/non-fat milk instead. To learn how sugary drinks are marketed to kids, see the Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity at <http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/>.

Working Toward a Healthier Community

The Norwalk Health Department, Norwalk Public Schools, and several other Norwalk organizations are helping children and their families learn ways to eat right and stay active. The Greater Norwalk Healthy Living Workgroup, a group of organizations led by the Health Department, works to promote healthy policies and programs in Norwalk and surrounding towns with the goal of preventing chronic disease and obesity in the community. Among its many initiatives, the Workgroup helps to promote Walk to School Day and Story Walk events and is working to update the Health Department's NorWalker routes. To learn more, check our website www.norwalkhealth.com or www.facebook.com/norwalkhealth.