

Study: U.S. babies are becoming fatter

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U.S. medical researchers have examined more than 120,000 Massachusetts children under age 6 for 22 years -- and found today's babies are fatter.

The study by Harvard Medical School and Harvard Pilgrim Health Care shows young children -- especially infants -- are more likely than children in past years to be overweight.

"The obesity epidemic has spared no age group, even our youngest children," said Dr. Matthew Gillman, senior author of the study and associate professor at Harvard.

During the 22-year study, the prevalence of overweight children increased from 6.3 percent to 10 percent -- a 59 percent jump based on weight and height measures. The proportion of children at risk of becoming overweight grew from 11.1 percent to 14.4 percent overall, a 30 percent jump.

Of all the age groups studied, infants had the greatest jump in risk of becoming overweight at 59 percent, and the number of overweight infants increased by 74 percent.

"This information is important to public health because previous studies show that accelerated weight gain in the first few months after birth is associated with obesity later in life," says Gillman.

The study is detailed in the journal *Obesity*.

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