

U.S. starts diabetes research program

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As U.S. students begin another school year, hundreds of sixth graders will be taking part in a wide-ranging diabetes study.

The National Institutes of Health-sponsored research at 42 middle schools is to determine if changes in school food services and physical education classes will lower risk factors for type 2 diabetes.

"The alarming rise in obesity and type 2 diabetes in all age groups poses a major public health crisis for this country," said NIH Director Elias Zerhouni. "This important study is one component of a multi-faceted research agenda to address this dual epidemic, which threatens the health of our youth and the vitality of our healthcare system."

Participating schools will be randomly assigned to a program group that implements the changes, or to a comparison group that will continue to be offered food choices and PE programs typically seen in U.S. middle schools.

Students in the program group will be offered healthier choices from the cafeteria and vending machines, along with longer, more intense periods of physical activity.

After 2.5 years, students will be tested for diabetes risk factors and will be measured for fitness level, blood pressure, height, weight, and waist circumference.

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