

# Prevalence of obesity among US children and teens does not increase

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There was no significant increase in the prevalence of obese children and teens in the U.S. between 1999 and 2006, in contrast to the increase that had been reported in prior years, according to a study in the May 28 issue of JAMA.

“In the United States, the prevalence of overweight among children increased between 1980 and 2004, and the heaviest children have been getting heavier,” the authors write.

Cynthia L. Ogden, Ph.D., of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Hyattsville, Md., and colleagues updated the most recent national estimates of the prevalence of pediatric high body mass index (BMI). Height and weight measurements were obtained from 8,165 children and adolescents as part of the 2003-2004 and 2005-2006 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), which are nationally representative surveys of the U.S. population.

High BMI was defined based on 2000 sex-specific BMI-for-age growth charts, and was reported based on three levels: at or above the 97th percentile, at or above the 95th percentile, and at or above the 85th percentile, according to these growth charts for U.S. children by age, sex and racial/ethnic group.

No statistically significant change in high BMI for age was found between 2003-2004 and 2005-2006. No statistically significant trend in high BMI was found over the time periods 1999-2000, 2001-2002,

2003-2004, and 2005-2006.

Because no significant differences were found between 2003-2004 and 2005-2006, these 2 two-year survey periods were combined to make detailed population estimates for the prevalence of high BMI. For 2003-2006, 11.3 percent of children and adolescents were at or above the 97th percentile of BMI for age. For the same period, 16.3 percent of children and adolescents had a BMI for age at or above the 95th percentile of BMI for age, and 31.9 percent were at or above the 85th percentile.

Prevalence estimates varied by age and by racial/ethnic group. Non-Hispanic black and Mexican American girls were more likely to have a high BMI for age than non-Hispanic white girls. Among boys, Mexican Americans were significantly more likely to have high BMI for age than non-Hispanic white boys.

Source: JAMA and Archives Journals

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