

# Professor finds link between obesity and federal school nutrition programs

May 11 2010

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With obesity becoming an epidemic among school-aged children in this country, a Georgia State University professor has found a link between overweight children and federal school nutrition programs.

Research reveals that children who eat lunch as part of the National [School](#) Lunch Program (NSLP) have an increased likelihood of becoming overweight, according to research co-authored by Rusty Tchernis, associate professor with Georgia State University's Andrew Young School of Policy Studies. The findings also show that the School Breakfast Program (SBP) is a "valuable tool in the current battle against [childhood obesity](#)," according to the research.

"[Overweight children](#) are more likely to become obese adults," Tchernis said. "So the only way to reduce obesity is to prevent it from happening in children."

The study, "School Nutrition Programs and the Incidence of Childhood Obesity," will be published in the summer edition of *The Journal of Human Resources*.

The research - co-authored also by Muna Husain and Daniel Millimet, both of Southern Methodist University - was funded with a \$200,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture through 2011.

For the study, Tchernis and his co-authors analyzed the relationship between the SBP and the NSLP and [obesity](#) using data on over 13,500

primary school students. Students were interviewed in kindergarten, first and third grades, and then again in later grades.

Other findings show that those who participate in both federal programs end up less heavy than those who don't participate in either, or those who only eat lunch as part of NSLP.

The NSLP provides lunch to more than 30 million children every day in approximately 101,000 schools, with 17.5 million students receiving reduced price or free meals, according to the program's website.

In recent years, some schools have banned soda as well as [vending machines](#) containing unhealthy snacks. Many school districts also are considering measures that could impact the government's program, using "Farm to School" programs.

"Some children don't know how to peel oranges," Tchernis said. "It's surprising how little [children](#) know about food."

Provided by Georgia State University

Citation: Professor finds link between obesity and federal school nutrition programs (2010, May 11) retrieved 9 April 2024 from

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