

Report shows some improvements in child well-being

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(HealthDay)—Preterm births are continuing to decline and smoking levels are at their lowest ever, but obesity has remained stable and diet quality still falls short of recommendations, according to the federal government's annual statistical report on the well-being of the nation's children and youth.

The Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, a working group of 22 Federal agencies, reviewed data and updated the Key National Indicators of Well-Being for America's children for 2013, with a special focus on the kindergarten Year.

According to the report, for the fifth consecutive year there was a decrease in the percentage of infants born preterm. The [infant mortality rate](#) in 2011 (6.0 deaths per 1,000 live births) was not significantly different from 2010. The average [diet quality](#) score was 50 out of 100 in 2007 to 2008 for children aged 2 to 17 years, and was not significantly different from that in 2003 to 2006; diet quality fell considerably short of recommendations. The prevalence of obesity remained stable at 18 percent for 6- to 17-year-olds. From 2007-2008 to 2009-2010 there was a decrease in the percent of children with any detectable level of blood cotinine, from 53 to 42 percent. The percentages of eighth, 10th-, and 12th-graders who reported smoking were the lowest ever (2, 5, and 9 percent, respectively). Among 12th-graders, [binge drinking](#) increased from 22 to 24 percent.

"Poor eating patterns in childhood are major contributors to [childhood obesity](#) and contribute to chronic diseases starting in childhood, such as type 2 diabetes, and those that emerge throughout the life cycle, such as cardiovascular disease," the authors write.

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