

Home schooled children leaner than traditionally schooled kids

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The results of a recent study show kids that are home-schooled are leaner than kids attending traditional schools. The results challenge the theory that children spending more time at home may be at risk for excessive weight gain.

The study was published in the journal *Obesity* and conducted by researchers from University of Colorado's Anschutz Health and Wellness Center (AHWC) and University of Alabama at Birmingham. It looked at both home-schooled and traditionally-schooled children between the ages of seven and 12 in Birmingham. Participants and their parents reported diet, the [kids' physical activity](#) was monitored and they were measured for body fat, among other things.

"Based on previous research, we went into this study thinking home-schooled children would be heavier and less active than kids attending traditional schools," said Michelle Cardel, PhD, RD, the study's lead author. "We found the opposite."

The results show that home-schoolers were less likely to be obese than the traditionally-schooled kids, even though kids in both groups were getting the same amount of moderate to [vigorous physical activity](#). The calorie intakes were also similar, except at lunchtime. Kids in traditional schools were consuming significantly more calories, sodium, and sugar at lunch. New school guidelines aimed at more nutritious lunches had not yet taken effect when the study data was collected from 2005 to 2009.

"We applaud the new school meal guidelines and efforts to give kids healthy options at school," Cardel said. "We don't know if we would have seen these same results if we had included [children](#) who brought their lunch to school. We think these differences may reflect the uniqueness of the home environment in home-school families but future research is needed to know for sure."

Cardel is now focusing her efforts on understanding the influence of race/ethnicity and socioeconomic differences on dietary intakes and obesity risk in elementary school students.

Provided by University of Colorado Denver

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