

# Obesity prevalence remains high in US; no significant change in recent years

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The prevalence of obesity remains high in the U.S., with about one-third of adults and 17 percent of children and teens obese in 2011-2012, according to a national survey study in the February 26 issue of *JAMA*.

Obesity and [childhood obesity](#), in particular, are the focus of many preventive health efforts in the United States, including new regulations implemented by the U.S. Department of Agriculture for food packages; funding by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of state- and community-level interventions; and numerous reports and recommendations issued by the Institute of Medicine, the U.S. Surgeon General, and the White House, according to background information in the article. Two articles published by the authors in *JAMA* in 2012 demonstrated that the prevalence of obesity leveled off between 2003-2004 and 2009-2010, but "given the focus of public health efforts on obesity, surveillance of trends in obesity remains important."

Cynthia L. Ogden, Ph.D., and colleagues from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Hyattsville, M.D., examined trends for childhood and [adult obesity](#) among 9,120 persons with measured weights and heights (or recumbent length) in the 2011-2012 nationally representative National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey.

The prevalence of high weight for recumbent length, a standard measure of weight among infants and toddlers from birth to age 2 years, was 8.1 percent in 2011-2012, with a difference between boys (5 percent) and girls (11.4 percent). For youth (2- to 19-years of age), 31.8 percent were

either overweight or obese, and 16.9 percent were obese. Among adults, more than two-thirds (68.5 percent) were either overweight or obese, 34.9 percent were obese (body mass index [BMI] 30 or greater), and 6.4 percent were extremely obese (BMI 40 or greater).

Overall, there was no change from 2003-2004 through 2011-2012 in high weight for recumbent length among infants and toddlers or in obesity in 2- to 19-year-olds or adults. The prevalence of obesity among children 2 to 5 years of age decreased from 14 percent in 2003-2004 to just over 8 percent in 2011-2012, and increased in women age 60 years and older, from 31.5 percent to more than 38 percent.

The authors conclude that "[obesity](#) prevalence remains high and thus it is important to continue surveillance."

**More information:** *JAMA* [DOI: 10.1001/jama.2014.732](https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2014.732)

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