

One in four NSW school kids are overweight or obese

June 16 2014

Nearly one in four New South Wales school children are overweight or obese according to a University of Sydney study reported in today's *Medical Journal of Australia*.

The new finding is the latest from a series of three statewide school surveys (1997, 2004 and 2010), providing a rolling snapshot of [children's](#) weight, [physical activity](#) and dietary behaviours.

Beginning in 1997 when school survey data showed that one in five children were overweight or obese (20 per cent), prevalence peaked at 24 per cent in 2004 before dropping slightly to 23 per cent in 2010, according to the latest survey data.

The study also reveals new information about diet, lifestyle and [obesity](#) among Aboriginal children.

Conditions such as obesity, [heart disease](#), stroke and Type 2 diabetes are more prevalent among Australian Aboriginal people but until now there's been limited data about diet, lifestyle or obesity among school-aged Aboriginal children.

The latest survey of more than 8,000 children reveals that nearly one in three aboriginal children are overweight or obese (29 per cent), compared to nearly one in four (23 per cent) among non-Aboriginal children.

"Childhood is a period when education about healthy eating and physical activity is vital for establishing healthy practices in later years," says study co-author and University of Sydney public health expert, Dr Blythe O'Hara.

"This is because childhood obesity predicts obesity in later life and raises people's risk for health problems such as coronary heart disease, hypertension, stroke, and Type 2 diabetes."

Other key findings from the 2010 survey include:

- Approximately 35 to 50 per cent of non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal children ate dinner in front of the television
- Approximately 50 to 60 per cent of non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal children were rewarded for good behavior with sugary foods
- Non-Aboriginal children were more likely to have breakfast every day (79 per cent compared to 70 per cent in Aboriginal children)
- Non-Aboriginal children were less likely to exceed the daily recommended screen time (no more than 2 hours daily)
- Overall, there was no significant difference in physical activity levels between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal children
- Physical activity levels were higher among older children (grades 6-10) than younger children (grades K-4).

More information: The complete study is available online:
www.mja.com.au/journal/2014/20...behaviour-australian

Provided by University of Sydney

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