

School breakfasts contribute to healthy weight, study finds

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Middle school students who eat breakfast at school—even if they have already had breakfast at home—are less likely to be overweight or obese than students who skip breakfast, says a new study by the Community Alliance for Research and Engagement (CARE) at the Yale School of Public Health and the Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity at the University of Connecticut.

The findings, published today in the journal *Pediatric Obesity*, bring new evidence to the ongoing debate over policy efforts to increase daily [school breakfast](#) consumption. Previous research has shown that eating breakfast is associated with improved academic performance, better health, and healthy body weight for students. But there have been concerns that a second breakfast at school following breakfast at home could increase the risk of unhealthy weight gain.

"Our study does not support those concerns," said Jeannette Ickovics, the paper's senior author, director of CARE, and a professor at Yale School of Public Health. "Providing a healthy breakfast to students at school helps alleviate food insecurity and is associated with students maintaining a healthy weight."

The study involved 584 [middle school students](#) from 12 schools in an urban school district where breakfast and lunch are provided to all students at no cost. Researchers tracked the students' breakfast-eating locations and patterns, and their weight over a two-year period from 5th grade in 2011-2012 to 7th grade in 2013-2014.

Specifically, the study found that:

- Students who skipped or ate breakfast inconsistently were more than twice as likely to be [overweight](#) or obese compared with students who ate double breakfasts.
- The weight changes from 5th to 7th grade for the students who ate double breakfasts was no different than the weight changes measured for all of the other students.

"When it comes to the relationship between school breakfast and body weight, our study suggests that two breakfasts are better than none," said Marlene Schwartz, a study author and director of the Rudd Center.

The study holds implications for advocates and policy makers working to reverse the nation's childhood [obesity](#) problem. Approximately one-third of American children between the ages of 6 and 11 are overweight or obese, with higher rates among black and Hispanic children than white children. School breakfast promotion initiatives have begun, but evidence is needed to ensure these efforts do not lead to the consumption of excess calories among children at risk for obesity.

Provided by Yale University

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