



The Obesity Epidemic and

United States Students

What is the problem?

The 2017 national Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicates that among U.S. high school students:

Obesity

- 14.8% had obesity (students who were \geq 95th percentile for body mass index, based on sex- and age-specific reference data from the 2000 CDC growth charts).
- 15.6% were overweight (students who were \geq 85th percentile but $<$ 95th percentile for body mass index, based on sex- and age-specific reference data from the 2000 CDC growth charts).

Unhealthy Dietary Behaviors

- 5.6% did not eat fruit or drink 100% fruit juices during the 7 days before the survey.
- 7.2% did not eat vegetables during the 7 days before the survey. (1)
- 7.1% drank a can, bottle, or glass of soda or pop three or more times per day during the 7 days before the survey. (2)
- 26.7% did not drink milk during the 7 days before the survey.
- 14.1% did not eat breakfast during the 7 days before the survey.

Physical Inactivity

- 15.4% were not physically active for a total of at least 60 minutes on at least 1 day during the 7 days before the survey. (3)
- 48.3% did not go to physical education (PE) classes on 1 or more days in an average week when they were in school.
- 20.7% watched television 3 or more hours per day on an average school day.
- 43% played video or computer games or used a computer for 3 or more hours per day on an average school day. (4)
- 45.7% did not play on at least one sports team counting any teams run by their school or community groups during the 12 months before the survey.

What are the solutions?

Better health education • More physical education and physical activity programs
Healthier school environments • Better nutrition services

What is the status?

The School Health Policies and Practices Study 2014 indicates that among U.S. high schools:

Health Education

- 88% required students to receive instruction on health topics as part of a specific course.
- 86% required students to receive instruction on nutrition and dietary behavior.
- 80% required students to receive instruction on physical activity.

Physical Education (PE) and Physical Activity

- 96% required students to take PE; among these schools 51% did not allow students to be exempted from taking a required PE course for certain reasons. (5)
- 4% required daily PE or its equivalent for students in all grades in the school for the entire year.
- 48% offered opportunities for students to participate in intramural activities or physical activity clubs.

School Environment

- In 12%, students could purchase fruits or vegetables. (6)
- In 58%, students could not purchase soda pop or fruit drinks that are not 100% juice. (6)
- In 73%, students could not purchase chocolate candy. (6)
- 77% did not allow students to purchase foods or beverages high in fat, sodium, or added sugars during school lunch periods.

Nutrition Services

- 87% offered a choice between 2 or more different fruits or types of 100% fruit juice each day for lunch.
- 72% did not sell any fried foods as part of school lunch.
- 84% offered lettuce, vegetable, or bean salads a la carte to students during a typical week.

1. Green salad, potatoes (excluding French fries, fried potatoes, or potato chips), carrots, or other vegetables.
2. Such as Coke, Pepsi, or Sprite, not counting diet soda or diet pop.
3. Doing any kind of physical activity that increased their heart rate and made them breathe hard some of the time.
4. Counting time spent on things such as Xbox, PlayStation, an iPad or other tablet, a smartphone, texting, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, or other social media, for something that was not school work, on an average school day.
5. Enrollment in other courses, participation in school sports, participation in other school activities, participation in community sports activities, high physical fitness test scores, participation in vocational training, and participation in community service activities.
6. From vending machines or in a school store, canteen, or snack bar.

Where can I get more information? Visit www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/data/ or call 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636).