

# PREVENTING CHRONIC DISEASE

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## Utah K-8th Grade Height and Weight Measurement Project

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**B**aseline height and weight data were established on more than 10,000 Utah children in kindergarten through eighth grade.

The prevalence of childhood overweight in the United States has tripled since 1966. In Utah, the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System is used to track adult overweight and obesity, and the Youth Risk Behavior Survey is used to track adolescent overweight. However, no data source exists to track childhood overweight.

Height and weight data were collected on 10,041 students at randomly selected elementary and middle schools in Utah. School nurses assisted with recruiting volunteers, scheduling, and measuring. The Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program provided staff, equipment, and measurement protocol. Screens were used to protect the children's privacy. Gender, birth date, height, and weight were recorded.

One fourth of Utah students in kindergarten through eighth grade — 28% of boys and 23% of girls — were overweight or at risk of becoming overweight. The percentage of students considered overweight was 12.2% — 14% for boys and 10% for girls. Since 1993, overweight among third-grade boys has increased by 119%; overweight among third-grade girls has increased by 40%.

Utah mirrors the national trend of increasing rates of childhood overweight; therefore, surveillance of kindergarten through eighth-grade students is important. With assistance from school nurses and parent and teacher volunteers, data can be collected in a timely manner. Consistent methodology is recommended, and children's privacy should be considered.

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