

# CAPITOL FACTS & FIGURES

## ● ● ● EDUCATION

### New School Meal Guidelines Provide Healthier Options

**Over the past 30 years, the rate of childhood obesity has more than tripled and will likely cause both immediate and long-term health problems.**

- The percentage of obese children aged 6-11 years increased from 7 percent in 1980 to nearly 20 percent in 2008. Adolescents aged 12-19 who are considered obese increased from 5 percent to 18 percent in the same period.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2008, more than one-third of children and adolescents were overweight or obese.<sup>2</sup>
- Genetic, behavioral and environmental factors play a part in children and adolescents becoming overweight or obese. A caloric imbalance, or expending too few calories for the amount consumed, however, is a prime cause of overweight or obese children.
- Health risks associated with childhood obesity include high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, breathing problems such as sleep apnea and asthma and joint discomfort. Children and adolescents who are obese also have a greater risk of social and psychological problems such as lower self-esteem which can continue into adulthood.<sup>3</sup>

**Schools play a critical role in reducing rates of childhood obesity through effective policies and practices that encourage healthy behaviors. Engaging students in healthy eating and nutrition programs can lower their risk for obesity.**

- Children consume as many as two meals per day, along with several snacks, in a school setting, which can impact caloric intake and nutritional value. The National School Lunch Program alone serves more than 30 million students per day.
- School districts participating in the National School Lunch Program must have a local school wellness policy as required by the Child Nutrition WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004. These policies serve as a tool for parents, local education agencies and schools in promoting school wellness, reducing childhood obesity and ensuring school meal nutrition guidelines meet the minimum federal standards. The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, passed in 2010, includes an emphasis on implementation, evaluation and public reporting of the wellness policies.



- Under U.S. Department of Agriculture standards for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, beginning July 1, 2012, schools must increase the availability of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free and low-fat fluid milk in school meals; reduce the levels of sodium, saturated fat and trans fat in meals; and meet the nutrition needs of students within their calorie requirements.<sup>4</sup>
- In the School Breakfast Program, meal requirements for a five-day school week include:
  - » Fruit: 5 cups at the K-12 level;
  - » Grains: 7-10 ounces (K-5), 8-10 ounces (6-8) and 9-10 ounces (9-12); and
  - » Fluid Milk: 5 cups at the K-12 level.<sup>5</sup>
- In the School Lunch Program, meal requirements for a five-day school week include:
  - » Fruit: 2.5 cups (K-8) and 5 cups (9-12);
  - » Vegetables: 3.75 cups (K-8) and 5 cups (9-12);
  - » Grains: 8-9 ounces (K-5), 8-10 ounces (6-8) and 10-12 ounces (9-12);
  - » Meats or Meat Alternatives: 8-10 ounces (K-5), 9-10 ounces (6-8) and 10-12 ounces (9-12); and
  - » Fluid Milk: 5 cups at the K-12 level.<sup>6</sup>
- USDA estimates that food costs in the beginning will increase by 2.5 cents per lunch served under the new requirements. The agency anticipates no immediate increase in breakfast food costs. Once the new requirements are fully implemented in 2014, food costs are expected to increase by 5 cents per lunch served and 14 cents per breakfast as compared to previous requirements.<sup>7</sup>

**State policies and local practices can have a positive impact on the quality of food served and sold in cafeterias; they also can encourage healthy eating.**

- Twenty-six states and Washington, D.C., have established farm-to-school programs. Five years ago, only New York had a farm-to-school program.<sup>8</sup>
- Florida created the Florida Farm Fresh Schools Program, which ensures collaborative efforts between the state’s Department of Education and Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to recommend policies that encourage the purchase of fresh, local food.
- Maine has emphasized nutritional education, and teachers are using fresh fruits and vegetables as learning tools. Students are able to encounter foods they have never tried before.
- In Vermont, monthly in-class taste tests showcase produce from local farms. Students visit local farms and create gardens at their schools. Community events such as cooking classes for young mothers are also a part of the state efforts.

**REFERENCES**

<sup>1</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Childhood Obesity Facts." Updated September 15, 2011. Accessed at: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/obesity/facts.htm>

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Basics about Childhood Obesity." Updated April 26, 2011. Accessed at: <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/childhood/basics.html>

<sup>4</sup>U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, 7 CFR Parts 210 and 220. "Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs" Accessed at: [http://www.ofr.gov/OFRUpload/OFRData/2012-01010\\_Pt.pdf](http://www.ofr.gov/OFRUpload/OFRData/2012-01010_Pt.pdf)

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

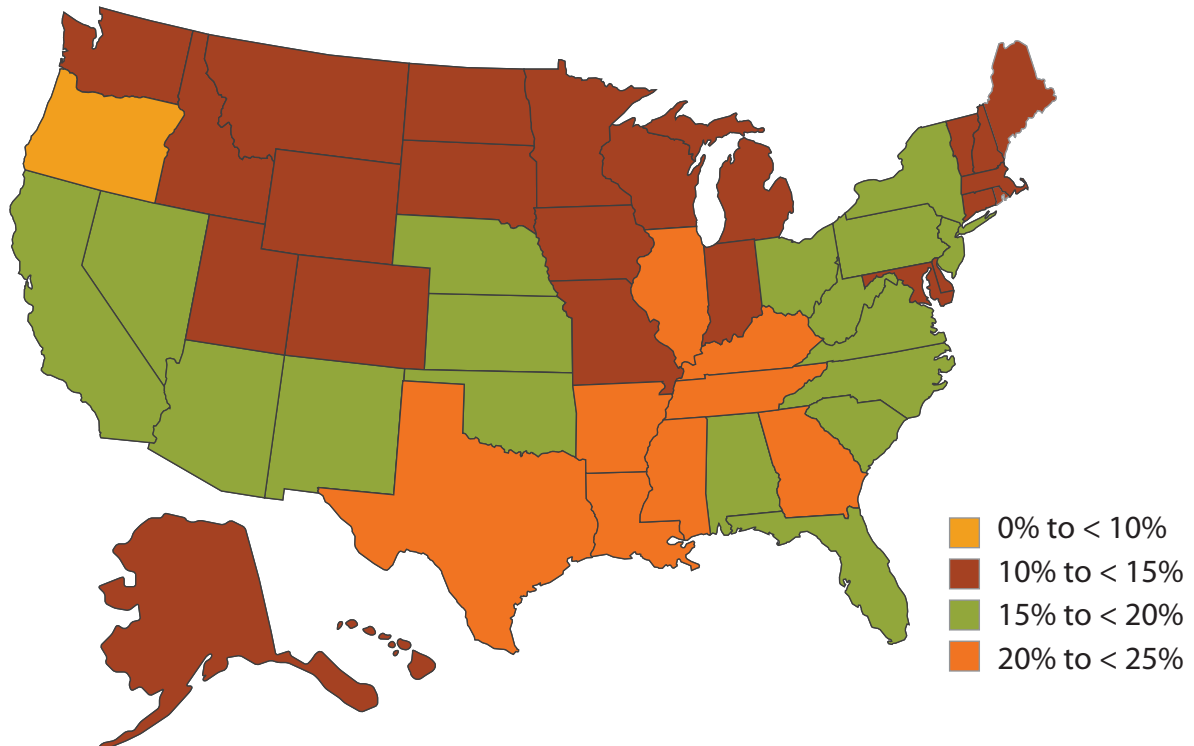
<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. "F as in Fat: How Obesity Threatens America's Future 2011." (2011). Accessed at <http://healthyamericans.org/report/88/>



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## Childhood Obesity Rates



Source: Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. "F as in Fat: How Obesity Threatens America's Future 2011." (2011). Accessed at <http://healthyamericans.org/report/88/>.

# Children and Adolescent Obesity and Overweight Rates by State

States	Percentage of Obese Children Ages 10-17	Ranking	Percentage of Obese High School Students	Percentage of Overweight High School Students	Percentage of Obese Low-income Children Ages 2-5
Alabama	17.9	14	13.5	17.5	14.4
Alaska	14.1	30	11.8	14.4	NA
Arizona	17.8	15	13.1	14.6	14.3
Arkansas	20.4	7	14.4	15.7	14.2
California	15	25	NA	NA	17
Colorado	14.2	29	7.1	11.1	9
Connecticut	12.5	40	10.4	14.5	16
Delaware	13.3	33	13.7	15.8	NA
District of Columbia	20.1	9	NA	NA	13.6
Florida	18.3	13	10.3	14.7	13.7
Georgia	21.3	2	12.4	14.8	14.2
Hawaii	11.2	46	14.5	14	9.3
Idaho	11.8	42	8.8	12	11.9
Illinois	20.7	4	11.9	15.5	14.6
Indiana	14.6	27	12.8	15.9	14.3
Iowa	11.2	46	NA	NA	15
Kansas	16.2	18	12.4	13.1	13.2
Kentucky	21	3	17.6	15.6	15.8
Louisiana	20.7	4	14.7	18	12.4
Maine	12.9	37	12.5	15.1	14.7
Maryland	13.6	31	12.2	15.6	15.8
Massachusetts	13.3	33	10.9	14.3	16.8
Michigan	12.4	41	11.9	14.2	13.7
Minnesota	11.1	48	NA	NA	13.1
Mississippi	21.9	1	18.3	16.5	13.9
Missouri	13.6	31	14.4	14.4	13.9
Montana	11.8	42	10.4	11.9	12.5
Nebraska	15.8	20	NA	NA	14.2
Nevada	15.2	23	11	13.4	13.9
New Hampshire	12.8	39	12.4	13.3	14.4
New Jersey	15.4	21	10.3	14.2	18.4
New Mexico	16	19	13.5	14.6	12
New York	17.1	16	11	15.6	14.4
North Carolina	18.6	11	13.4	14.6	15.2
North Dakota	11.4	44	11	13.5	14.1
Ohio	18.5	12	NA	NA	12.3
Oklahoma	16.4	17	14.1	16.4	NA
Oregon	9.6	51	NA	NA	15
Pennsylvania	15	25	11.8	15.9	12
Rhode Island	14.4	28	10.4	16.7	16.2
South Carolina	15.3	22	16.7	15	13.3
South Dakota	13.2	35	9.6	12.6	16.4
Tennessee	20.6	6	15.8	16.1	14
Texas	20.4	7	13.6	15.6	16
Utah	11.4	44	6.4	10.5	8.8
Vermont	12.9	37	12.2	13.6	13.2
Virginia	15.2	23	NA	NA	18
Washington	11.1	48	NA	NA	14.4
West Virginia	18.9	10	14.2	14.4	13.4
Wisconsin	13.1	36	9.3	14	13.7
Wyoming	10.2	50	9.8	12.6	NA

Source: Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, *F as in Fat: How Obesity Threatens America's Future* 2011. (2011) Accessed at <http://healthyamericans.org/report/88/>