

# Childhood Obesity Prevention

Michigan Department of Community Health  
Cardiovascular Health, Nutrition & Physical Activity Section

The Problem:

- Physical inactivity ⇨⇨⇨⇨⇨⇨⇨⇨⇨
- Unhealthy eating habits ⇨⇨⇨⇨⇨

## Unhealthy Weight

### Why Be Concerned?

- Only 44% of male adolescents and 27% of female adolescents meet the minimum average daily goal of at least five servings of vegetables and fruits.<sup>3</sup>
- One third of students do not receive the recommended amount of both moderate and vigorous physical activity during the week.<sup>3</sup>
- Only one fifth of all students drank the recommended amount of three glasses of milk daily. Females and African American students were approximately half as likely as males and white students to drink enough milk.<sup>3</sup>
- Younger students were more likely to watch three or more hours of television each day on an average school day.<sup>3</sup>

Overweight and obesity are critical health issues in America, and the trend among children is alarming. The number of children, ages 6 to 11, who are overweight has more than doubled in the past twenty years, while the number of overweight adolescents has tripled.<sup>1</sup> The chart below addresses students in grades 9–12 and illustrates why students' physical activity and eating habits are a concern in Michigan.<sup>2,3</sup>

	At risk for becoming Overweight	Overweight
US	14%	10%
MI	13%	11%

These statistics are disturbing because children who are overweight at age six and beyond have a greater than 50 percent chance of being obese as adults.<sup>4</sup>

- Daily participation in physical education class has dropped from 42% in 1991 to 25% in 1999.<sup>3</sup>
- Major decreases in vigorous physical activity occur during grades 9-12, particularly for girls; by 11<sup>th</sup> grade more than half of female students are not participating in regular physical activity.<sup>3</sup>

### Unhealthy Weight May Lead To Lifelong Health Problems.

Overweight children, especially adolescents, are more likely to become overweight adults than children with a healthy weight. Serious health conditions – high blood pressure, high cholesterol, hypertension, early maturation, and orthopedic problems – occur with increased frequency in overweight youth.<sup>5</sup> Type 2 diabetes, once regarded as an adult disease, has increased among children and adolescents.<sup>6,7</sup>

The Health Of Michigan Children Can Be Improved  
Through Healthy Eating And Physical Activity!

# What MDCH Is Doing To Address Childhood Obesity

The Role of Michigan Schools in Promoting Healthy Weight consensus paper \* was published in September 2001. It was written to provide practical guidelines and policy recommendations to school districts for promoting healthy weight for all students. This was a collaboration with the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) and the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports. The consensus paper provides an innovative roadmap for schools and communities to use when addressing childhood obesity and healthy school environments. All of MDCH's childhood obesity prevention and school health projects target the implementation of the recommendations outlined in the consensus paper.

Healthy Kids - Healthy Weight: Tips for Families \* are educational materials developed for parents of school aged children of all shapes and sizes. The Healthy Weight Medical Advisory Committee and parent focus groups participated in the development of the materials. These materials will be available to schools and parents free of charge beginning Summer 2003.



Promoting Healthy Weight In Michigan Schools Training \* was developed in 2002 and is based on guidelines published by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention for Body Mass Index and outlined in The Role of Michigan Schools in Promoting Healthy Weight consensus paper. The target audience is school staff members who are currently weighting and measuring children. In 2003, MDCH is partnering with the MDE to provide two regional trainings for interested school staff.

**Collaboration Works!**  
MDCH's Cardiovascular Health, Nutrition and Physical Activity Section is proud of its strong relationship with the Michigan Department of Education's Office of School Excellence. All of the projects above marked with a \* are collaborative initiatives.

The Healthy Weight Demonstration grants \* to implement healthy weight recommendations were distributed to 13 schools for the 2002-2003 school year. MDCH and MDE provided facilitation expertise and consultation to the school demonstration sites to implement the School Health Index, The Role of Michigan Schools in Promoting Healthy Weight consensus paper and make policy and environmental changes related to physical activity and healthy eating.

Promoting Healthy Weight – School Health Index Facilitation Trainings \* began in 2002 and will continue in 2003. To date, approximately 50 participants have been trained in facilitation skills and in implementing the recommendations in The Role of Michigan Schools in Promoting Healthy Weight consensus paper, conducting an assessment like the School Health Index with a Coordinated School Health Team, and making policy and environmental changes that target physical activity and healthy eating. This training promoted Michigan's unique process for completing the School Health Index using a non-school staff facilitator. CDC and Harvard are reviewing Michigan's results using this process and are promoting trained facilitators nationwide.

# What MDCH Is Doing To Address Childhood Obesity

A statewide Walk Your Child To School Day event will increase the number of Michigan children who safely walk and bike to school. The goal of the event is to increase statewide awareness of the health benefits of walking and biking to school, beginning the process to eliminate local barriers to walking and biking to school. These projects are a collaboration between MDCH and The Governor's Council on Physical Fitness Health and Sports.

Exemplary Physical Education Curriculum is a K-12 physical education curriculum from MDCH, The Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports & The Michigan Fitness Foundation. This curriculum changes the way physical education is taught and equips children for a lifetime of physical activity.

## Major Partners in Childhood Obesity Prevention:

- Michigan Department of Education
- United Dairy Industry of Michigan
- National Kidney Foundation of MI
- Michigan State University Extension
- Team Nutrition
- MI Action For Healthy Kids Coalition
- Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health & Sports

Every Body Is Good \* A series of lessons to promote positive body image in school aged children are currently being developed for use during physical education class. The lessons will teach weight and growth related concepts recommended in the consensus paper, The Role of Michigan Schools in Promoting Healthy Weight.

Eat Healthy + Play Hard = Smart Students: A Formula For Creating Healthy School Environments To Improve Academic Performance \* is a statewide conference from MDCH, MDE and the United Dairy Industry of Michigan. The target audience is school district officials, school building personnel, school health personnel, school food service personnel, school parent/teacher representatives, public health representatives, and community partners interested in health and education. This conference was planned after an overwhelming response to the consensus paper recommendations. Presentations were requested all over Michigan and it was decided that a coordinated approach with in-depth training was the most cost effective course of action.



MIHealthTools.org \* is a website that will feature multiple assessment tools promoted by MDCH. The School Health Index, an assessment and planning tool from CDC, is being added to address childhood obesity prevention and healthy school policies and environments. Coordinated School Health Teams can complete the assessment online and have access to hot links for online resources at their fingertips. This website will allow data to be consistently collected and analyzed quickly.

## References

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