

CHILD NUTRITION IN TEXAS

Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living

Texas children aren't meeting nutrition guidelines

The USDA Dietary Guidelines¹ recommends focusing on a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, fat-free or low-fat dairy products, and high protein foods. They also recommend limiting added sugars and saturated fats and reducing sodium intake.

Nutrition Crisis

On a given school day:



Over 2.5 million (32%) of Texas children do not eat any vegetables.²



Over 1.5 million (19%) of Texas children do not eat fruit.²



28% of 8th graders and 36% of 11th graders do not eat breakfast.²

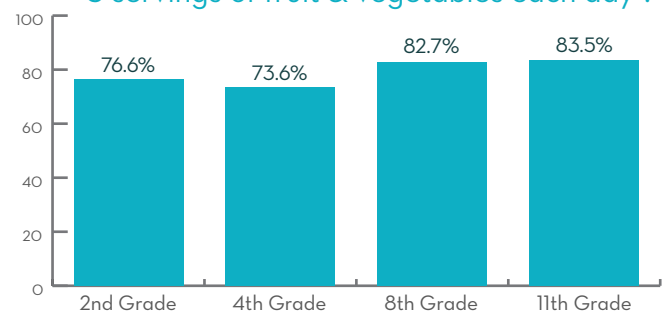


Over 80% of Texas children eat at least one sweet or salty snack (candy, frozen dessert, cakes, french fries, or chips).²

Current and Lifetime Risks

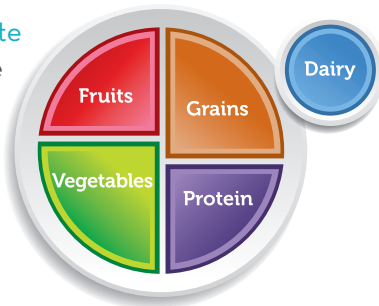
- A healthy diet is associated with better physical, psychological, and social health.³
- Skipping breakfast leads to overweight & obesity.⁴
- Children who eat more fruits & vegetables have lower body weight.⁵
- A high sugar, low fiber diet is related to lower creativity test scores.⁶

Texas students who **do not** consume at least 5 servings of fruit & vegetables each day²:



How we can improve Texas children's nutrition

The USDA MyPlate illustrates the five food groups that are the building blocks for a healthy diet.⁷



- Label food in school cafeterias, such as GO, SLOW, WHOA^{8,9}
- Ensure all school children have access to a healthy breakfast
- Implement a proven coordinated school health program, such as CATCH^{10,11}
- Limit unhealthy food & drink marketing to young children
- Ensure fast food kids meals default to healthy choices, such as milk or water instead of sugary drinks

Current Nutrition Guidelines¹

The US Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Agriculture advise following a healthy eating pattern across the lifespan. Their 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends focusing on variety, nutrient density, and quantity, limiting calories from added sugars and saturated fats, reducing sodium intake, and shifting to healthier food and beverage choices.

A healthy eating pattern includes a variety of vegetables, fruits, grains (at least half of which are whole grains) fat-free or low-fat dairy, a variety of protein-rich foods, and oils. A healthy eating pattern limits saturated fats and trans fats, added sugars, and sodium.

References

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The School Physical Activity and Nutrition (SPAN) Project is a surveillance system monitoring the prevalence of overweight/obesity in school-aged children in Texas conducted by researchers at the Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living. SPAN has been funded by the Texas Department of State Health Services since 2000 to conduct height and weight measurements across different grade levels.
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About the Texas Child Health Status Report

This project is funded by the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation. These reports utilize state-level data from the School Physical Activity and Nutrition (SPAN) Project to provide an accurate representation of Texas child health.

Learn more at go.uth.edu/TexasChildHealth