Healthy Children, Healthy State:

Child Obesity in Texas

Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living

CHILD OBESITY IS A MAJOR PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERN IN TEXAS

Childhood obesity has long-term health impacts. Children with obesity are more likely to have obesity in adolescence and adulthood. It is important to take preventative steps early to combat childhood obesity.[1]

Obesity Status Among Texas Children

Texas has the **6th** highest obesity rate for children ages 6-17 in the U.S.[2]

1 in 4 of school-aged children and adolescents in Texas have obesity, compared to **1 in 5** students in the United States.

29% of school-aged boys have obesity compared to **22%** of girls in Texas.

The percentage of students in Texas with obesity varies by where students live.

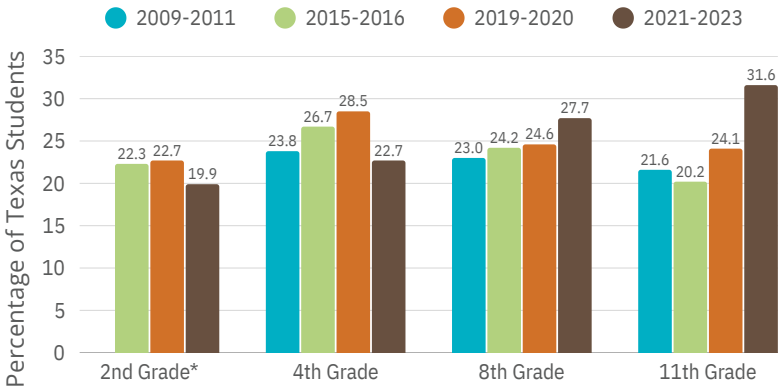
- Community type
  - **23%** in large urban communities
  - **26%** in urban & suburban communities
  - **28%** in rural communities
- Texas/Mexico border
  - **29%** in border counties
  - **25%** in non-border counties

Why Should We Address Children's Obesity

Obesity is associated with increased risks for poor physical and psychological health outcomes, including:[1]

- Chronic diseases: diabetes, heart disease, asthma, high blood pressure
- Depression and anxiety
- Sleeping difficulties

Trends in Child Obesity in Texas (2009 to 2023) Varies by Grade Level



*NOTE: No data were collected for 2nd grade in 2009-2011.

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SPAN Texas School Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey

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How to address Texas children's obesity

Parents and family members are role models and educators for their children developing healthy habits.[3-5]

- Encourage a healthy eating pattern, such as a regular breakfast.
- Offer nutrient-dense foods, such as fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Limit consumption of foods and beverages with high added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium.
- Limit TV and electronic device use during meals, snack times, and in bedrooms.
- Have children engage in activities that promote health and well-being, such as outdoor play and sports teams.
- Discuss child's weight concerns with health care professionals.

Schools can promote healthy behaviors during and after the school day.

- Offer school breakfast and lunch to all students.
- Provide structured physical education with evidence-based programs.[6]
- Implement classroom physical activity breaks and recess.
- Allow students to use sports and exercise facilities outside of school hours.

Policy recommendations to address children's obesity[7-9]

- Decrease sugary drinks and ultra-processed food marketing to children.
- Cover intensive health behavior and lifestyle treatment programs in Medicaid and CHIP.

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About: Texas Child Health Status Report

These reports utilize state-level data from the Texas School Physical Activity and Nutrition (Texas SPAN) Project 2021-2023 to provide an accurate representation of Texas child health.

Learn more at go.uth.edu/TexasChildHealth

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