



Food Day Fact Sheet

Promote Healthier Diets for Children

THE FACTS

- More than one-third of American children and adolescents ages 6 to 19 years old are overweight or obese. Between 1988–1994 and 2007–2008, the prevalence of childhood obesity increased at all income levels.
- Obesity has immediate effects on a child's health, including increasing the risk of fatty liver disease, causing breathing or joint problems, and possible social discrimination. In the long-term, obese children are more likely to be obese as adults, which can increase the risk of diabetes, heart disease, some cancers, and other chronic diseases.
- Up to 1 in 3 new cases of diabetes diagnosed in youth under aged 18 is type 2 diabetes (formerly called adult-onset diabetes). The prevalence of type 2 diabetes in Americans under 20 years old increased by 21 percent from 2001 to 2009.
- In 2009–2010, about 17 percent of U.S. children and adolescents were obese, which was unchanged from 2007–2008. This apparent levelling off may be due, in part, to decreased consumption of sugary beverages.
- Promising drops in obesity rates have occurred among young children and adolescents in New York City and Los Angeles.
- More than 80 percent of adolescents aged 12 to 18 do not eat the recommended five or more servings of fruits or vegetables each day.
- About 17 percent of males and 20 percent of females aged 14 to 18 consume more than a quarter of their daily calories from added sugars. In this age group, males and females consume an average of 27 and 20 teaspoons of added sugar per day, respectively. For children and adults who consume more than a quarter of their calories from added sugar, about 60 percent of the added sugars comes from regular soft drinks and fruit ades.
- Males and females aged 12 to 19 consume an average of 273 and 171 total calories per day from sugary drinks, respectively. That is more than any other age group.
- Among low-income children aged 2 to 11, the average number of cavities increased from about 4 in 1988–1994 to about 6 in 1999–2004. That increase may be partially explained by poor nutrition.
- American children aged 8 to 18 consume nearly 3,400 milligrams of sodium per day; twice the recommended amount. High sodium intake is associated with the risk of pre- and high blood pressure in U.S. children and adolescents. High-sodium diets appear to raise blood pressure even in infants.
- The FDA recognizes that artificial food dyes increase hyperactivity in children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and other problem behaviors.