

Overview

Obesity rates among youth have tripled in recent decades, and are particularly high among Hispanic and non-Hispanic Black youth. This is a problem, because adolescents who are obese are more likely to become obese adults and more likely to have chronic health conditions, a shorter life expectancy, and face social discrimination. The Federal Government has created recommendations for physical activity and healthy eating through Healthy People 2020 and 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Many national and local campaigns have shared these recommendations. The Maine Youth Overweight Collaborative has combined 4 recommendations into a simple message for youth in its a "Let's Go! 5-2-1-0" program. The messages are to eat five or more fruits and vegetables a day, limit screen time (television, video games) to no more than 2 hours a day, be physically active for an hour or more a day, and avoid beverages that contain sugar, such as soda.

Main Questions

- Are children and adolescents in the United States meeting the 5-2-1-0 targets? If so, which targets are being met?
- What are the differences among how youth of different racial groups are meeting these targets?

Study

Using a national survey National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) (2011-2012), the study looked to see how the youth across the country were following the 4 messages in the 5-2-1-0 recommendations, and to see if there were differences among youth of different racial and ethnic groups. The study looked at the self-reported answers to questions that were answered by 967 youth (representing 32,656,058) of ages 6-11 years old, and 987 adolescents (representing 32,223,921) of ages 12-19 years. It examined results from 4 self-reported racial/ethnic groups (non-Hispanic White, non-Hispanic Black, Asian, and Hispanic).

The Bottom Line

Low rates of children and adolescents meet recommended dietary and physical activity guidelines, and there are large differences among youth of different racial/ethnic groups. Despite public health efforts, there has been little improvement in meeting the 5-2-1-0 targets, when compared to the NHANES 1999-2002 survey. The one area of improvement is an increase in physical activity among adolescents.

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Source

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Spotlight on Results

- **Children:** 0.03% met all 5-2-1-0 behaviors, 5% met three of them, 29% met two of them, 46% met 1 target, and 19% did not meet any of the targets.
- **Adolescents:** 0% met all 5-2-1-0 behaviors, 3% met three of them, 18% met two of them, 46% met 1 target, and 33% did not meet any of the targets.
- The physical activity target was met most often, and the screen time target had the greatest variability among racial/ethnic groups.
- Non-Hispanic White children had the highest proportions of meeting specific targets.
- Proportions of youth meeting zero targets were higher among adolescents than children.

Call for Action

There is a great need for finding programs that work, especially in interventions with youth of different ethnic/racial groups. In particular, policies and programs that help youth be more active and limit sugar-sweetened beverages and eat more fruits and vegetables are needed.