



## Health Statistics Fact Sheet— Children and Youth

Childhood obesity prevention is a key priority of the California Department of Public Health. Obesity increases the risk of many health conditions (i.e., coronary heart disease, stroke, and high blood pressure; type 2 diabetes; endometrial, breast, and colon cancer; liver and gallbladder disease; and sleep apnea and respiratory problems) and contributes to some of the leading causes of preventable death, posing a major public health challenge.<sup>1,2</sup>

### DIET

- California's low-income 6-11 year old children report eating 1.7 cups (or 3.5 servings) of fruits and vegetables per day.<sup>3</sup>
- California's low-income 6-11 year old children average just under one (0.82) serving of sugar — sweetened beverages (SSB) per day (Table 51).<sup>3</sup>
- Fast food consumption among low-income 6-11 year old children is associated with 379 more total calories (1,712 vs. 1,334) and 139 more empty calories (452 vs. 313) per day among low-income children in California (Table 59).<sup>3</sup>

### PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SCREEN TIME

- Just over half (55.5%) of California's low-income 6-11 year old children report getting the recommended amount of physical activity (60 or more minutes per day) (Table 73).<sup>3,4</sup>

- The majority (85.9%) of low-income children (6-11 years) in California meet the guideline for television (TV) viewing (no more than 2 hours a day), falling just below the *Healthy People 2020* target of 86.8%. (Table 77).<sup>3,5</sup>

### OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY

Overweight among children is defined as a Body Mass Index (BMI) at or above the 85th percentile, but below the 95th percentile. Obesity is represented by a BMI at the 95th percentile or higher.

- In 2015, 16% of low-income ( $\leq 185\%$  FPL) children (2–11 years) were classified as overweight-for-age, as compared to 14% of children from higher income households ( $>185\%$  FPL).<sup>6</sup>
- Studies suggest that children may gain weight more than twice as fast in the summer as they do during the regular school year.<sup>7-9</sup> A lack of structured play and routine can lead children to eat unhealthy foods and not get enough physical activity during the summer.<sup>7-10</sup>

### SOCIAL NORMS AND ENVIRONMENT

- Participation in school meals is positively related to fruit and vegetable consumption. Low-income children report a half serving more of fruits and vegetables when eating school breakfast (3.8 vs. 3.3 servings) and nearly three-quarters of a serving more fruits and vegetables at school lunch than those

not eating these school meals (3.9 vs. 3.2 servings) (Table 1).<sup>3</sup>

- Studies examining breakfast habits and nutritional status in children and adolescents show that breakfast consumption may improve cognitive function related to memory, test grades, and school attendance.<sup>11</sup>
- Children from low-income homes who report that the physical education offered at their school meets the California mandate of 200 or more minutes every 10 days are more likely to meet the daily physical activity recommendation (60 or more minutes) than those attending schools that provide less physical education (61.4 vs. 51.2%) (Table 104).<sup>3,4</sup>
- Access to the vegetables preferred at home and eating family meals together relates to higher fruit and vegetable intake among low-income children (1.9 vs. 1.6 servings, 1.8 vs. 1.3 servings; respectively). In contrast, children who report that adults in their home always eat high-fat foods drink one-third of a serving more SSBs per day (1.1 vs. 0.8 servings) (Table 103).<sup>3</sup>
- Household rules limiting TV time to no more than two hours a day relates to nearly 17 minutes less screen time per day (77.7 vs. 94.6 minutes) and more children meeting

the *Healthy People 2020* objective (88.3 vs. 76.4%). In addition, low-income children who have a TV in their bedroom are less active (75.5 vs. 88.6 minutes) and less likely to meet the screen time recommendation (83.7 vs. 89.9%) than those without a TV in their bedroom (Table 104).<sup>3,5</sup>

- Low-income children who exercise together with their family report nearly 25 more minutes of physical activity per day (84.0 vs. 59.6 minutes) and are more likely to meet the recommendations for physical activity (60 or more minutes per day; 57.3 vs. 43.3%) and screen time (no more than 2 hours a day; 87.0 vs. 78.3%) (Table 104).<sup>3,4</sup>

## FOOD SECURITY

- Nearly one-quarter (23%) of California children under age 18 live in households that experience food insecurity.<sup>12</sup>

## YOUTH VOICE

- About three-quarters of teens report that they are either somewhat (56.7%) or very (18.9%) interested in taking action to improve nutrition or physical activity in their school and community, while over a quarter (27.4%) said that they already have.<sup>13</sup>

## REFERENCES

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