

Overweight Children

Nearly one-third of Contra Costa's fifth graders are overweight. In some schools the rate is much greater.



According to the California Department of Education, Standards and Assessment Division, **31% of Contra Costa fifth graders are overweight.** This means that there are **approximately 11,764 overweight fifth graders** attending schools in this county.

During the 2002-03 school year, all fifth graders in California were required to take the California Physical Fitness Test, which included measurements of body fat composition.

As a whole, fifth graders in Contra Costa (31%) are less likely to be overweight than students in California (33%).

Fifth graders in the Byron Unified (47%), Pittsburg Unified (46%) and West Contra Costa Unified (42%) school districts are more likely to be overweight compared to the county overall.

Table 64. Fifth graders who are overweight, Contra Costa, 2002-2003

Area:	Percent overweight	Number
Byron Union Elementary	*47%	142
Pittsburg Unified	*46%	737
West Contra Costa Unified	*42%	2,573
Antioch Unified	33%	1,587
Knightsen Elementary	30%	44
Martinez Unified	29%	287
San Ramon Valley Unified	29%	1,646
John Swett Unified (Rodeo)	27%	137
Mt. Diablo Unified	26%	2,836
Oakley Union Elementary	21%	480
Walnut Creek Elementary	18%	357
Orinda Union Elementary	17%	275
Lafayette Elementary	14%	414
Moraga Elementary	11%	218
Contra Costa Total:	31%	11,764

***** Indicates that the proportion of overweight fifth graders is significantly higher in these school districts compared to Contra Costa overall.

These statistics include districts that tested 25 or more fifth graders during the 2002-2003 school year.

The greatest number of overweight students can be found in Central County's Mt. Diablo Unified school district (2,836),

followed by the West Contra Costa Unified (2,573), San Ramon Valley Unified (1,646) and Antioch Unified (1,587) school districts.

This problem is getting worse

The percentage of children who are extremely overweight/obese has increased steadily throughout the past 20 years, and that trend is expected to continue.

Most Bay Area adults (69%) say that being overweight or obese is a major problem facing children and teens today, but only 13% say that it is their biggest problem.

Current habits can impact future health

It has been estimated that **one half of overweight school-age children will remain overweight as adults**. People who are overweight or obese are more likely to be depressed and to have chronic diseases like arthritis, breathing problems, diabetes, certain types of cancer, heart disease and stroke.

When Bay Area adults were asked about the major reasons why children and teens are overweight, their top answers were that **children and teens do not exercise regularly** (89%), that fast **food restaurants** and food companies make too much unhealthy food (54%) and that **too much advertising** is aimed at children and teens (45%).

The vast majority of Bay Area adults do not think schools should allow vending machines (58%), soda machines (66%), fast food restaurants (81%) or junk food advertisements (83%).

Using this data to improve community health

In order to reduce health disparities (differences), it is important to target the school districts with the highest percent of overweight children. For fifth graders in Contra Costa, these are the Byron Unified, Pittsburg Unified and West Contra Costa Unified school districts.

In order to decrease the overall number of overweight children, without regard to health disparities, it may be better to target interventions to the school districts with the highest number of overweight students. For fifth graders in Contra Costa, these are the Mount Diablo Unified, West Contra Costa Unified, San Ramon Valley Unified and Antioch Unified school districts.

Examples of health programs to address childhood overweight include expanding physical education, limiting fast food and soda sold in vending machines at schools or educating parents about how to shop for and prepare healthy foods.

What is overweight?

A person is considered overweight if their body mass index is between 24 and 29.9. A person can calculate their own BMI by dividing their weight (in pounds) by their height squared (in inches) and then multiplying the result times 703.

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{Weight (in pounds)}}{\text{Height (in inches)} \times \text{Height (in inches)}} \times 703$$

An online BMI calculator is available through the Center for Disease Control and Prevention website at <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/calc-bmi.htm>.

Confidence intervals are available

You may download and view all detailed tables with 95% confidence intervals, at...
http://cchealth.org/health_data/hospital_council/

Data sources

Data about overweight children was compiled by the California Department of Education, Standards and Assessment Division, and is available online at <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>. For more information about the definition of "overweight," please visit the website listed above. The definitions used in this study are identical to the ones used by the California Center for Health Policy Research and different from the ones used by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Information about trends and health conditions associated with being overweight or obese from the CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, available online at <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/>.

Information about national trends from the National Heart, Blood, and Lung Institute Obesity Education Initiative Expert Panel. Clinical Guidelines on the identification, evaluation, and treatment of overweight and obesity in adults. Washington, DC, 1998.

Information about the proportion of overweight school children who remain overweight as adults from Serdula MK, Ivery D, Coates RJ, Freedman DS, Williamson DF and Beyers T. Do obese children become obese adults? A review of the literature. Preventive Medicine 1993; 22; 167-177.

Information about Bay Area views on children who are overweight or obese was compiled by the San Jose Mercury News/Kaiser Family Foundation. The detailed findings are available online at <http://www.kff.org>. In November and December 2003, the San Jose Mercury News/Kaiser Family Foundation conducted a telephone survey among a representative sample of 1,175 randomly selected adults from Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Sonoma and Solano counties. This sample included 292 parents with children from kindergarten through the 12th grade.