

# Overweight Kids

More than 1 in 4 fifth graders in Contra Costa are overweight

In 2005-06, 3,431 fifth graders in Contra Costa were overweight. Contra Costa fifth graders are less likely to be overweight than their peers statewide. The percent of overweight 5th graders in the county is lower than that of the state: Contra Costa (27.5%) versus California (32.6%).

School districts with the greatest number of overweight 5th graders in the county West Contra Costa Unified (826), Mt. Diablo Unified (698), Antioch Unified (512), Pittsburg Unified (377), San Ramon Valley Unified (237) and Oakley Union Elementary (222).

Districts with a higher percent of overweight 5th graders than the county overall include: Oakley Union Elementary (44.1%), Pittsburg Unified (43.7%), West Contra Costa Unified (35.3%), and Antioch Unified (33.1%).

- Many overweight 5th graders in the county are Latinos.
- Fifth grade boys are more likely to be overweight than girls.
- Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, Latino, and African American 5th graders are more likely to be overweight than their peers.

Local Findings

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Editor's note: Whether or not a child is "overweight" is assessed in this report using measurements taken as part of California Department of Education's Physical Fitness Test. For more information, see the footnotes.

## Overweight 5th Graders by School District

Table 1a. Selected Contra Costa Communities, 2005–06

District	Number	Percent
West Contra Costa Unified	826	*35.3%
Mt Diablo Unified	698	25.9%
Antioch Unified	512	*33.1%
Pittsburg Unified	377	*43.7%
San Ramon Valley Unified	237	**12.9%
Oakley Union Elementary	222	*44.1%
Martinez Unified	78	24.8%
Walnut Creek Elementary	62	**17.0%
Lafayette Elementary	62	**15.7%
Byron Union Elementary	48	29.1%
Moraga Elementary	47	**20.7%
John Swett Unified	31	25.8%
Orinda Union Elementary	27	**11.7%
Knightsen Elementary	12	22.6%
Contra Costa County	3,431	27.5%

Some school districts are not listed above but are included in the county totals.

\* Significantly higher percent than 5th graders in the county overall.

\*\* Significantly lower



## Low-income Elementary School Students by School District

Table 1b. Selected Contra Costa Communities, 2005–06

District	Percent low-income
Pittsburg Unified	*75.9%
West Contra Costa Unified	*67.2%
John Swett Unified	*53.6%
Antioch Unified	*41.6%
<b>Contra Costa County</b>	<b>36.6%</b>
Mt. Diablo Unified	36.1%
Oakley Union Elementary	**34.0%
Knightsen Elementary	**24.4%
Martinez Unified	**21.2%
Byron Union Elementary	**13.1%
Walnut Creek Elementary	**9.3%
San Ramon Valley Unified	**1.5%
Lafayette Elementary	**1.3%
Orinda Union Elementary	**0.5%
Moraga Elementary	**0.3%

These students are eligible for free or reduced-priced meals.

\* Significantly higher percent than elementary school students in the county overall.

\*\* Significantly lower

Students from low-income communities are more likely to be overweight than those in the county overall. Three of the four Contra Costa school districts with a greater proportion of overweight 5th graders (See Table 1a.) also have a greater proportion of low-income elementary

school students than the county overall: Pittsburg Unified, West Contra Costa Unified, and Antioch Unified. (See Table 1b.)

## Overweight 5th Graders by Gender

Table 2. Contra Costa, 2005–06

	<b>Percent</b>
Boys	*34.1%
Girls	20.8%
Contra Costa	27.5%

\* Significantly higher percent than girls.

There are more overweight 5th grade boys (2,154) than girls (1,281) in Contra Costa. Boys in the county are also more likely than girls to be overweight. More than a third (34.1%) of 5th grade boys are overweight compared to 20.8% of girls.



## Overweight 5th Graders by Race/Ethnicity

Table 3. Contra Costa, 2005–06

	Number	Percent
Latino	1,291	*38.2%
White	1,068	**19.7%
African American	496	*35.8%
Asian	349	**22.1%
Pacific Islander	53	*47.3%
American Indian/ Alaska Native	34	*41.5%
Contra Costa	3,431	27.5%

\* Significantly higher percent than 5th graders in the county overall.

\*\* Significantly lower

Contra Costa 5th graders from several race/ethnic groups are more likely to be overweight than their peers in the county overall. Greater percentages of Pacific Islander (47.3%), American Indian/Alaska Native (41.5%), Latino (38.2%), and African American (35.8%) 5th graders are overweight than 5th graders in the county overall (27.5%).

Some of these high-risk groups also represent large numbers of overweight students. Many overweight 5th graders in Contra Costa are Latinos (1,291) followed by Whites (1,068), African Americans (496) and Asians (349).

### Childhood overweight is a serious and complex health issue

Overweight is a serious health issue for young people. According to the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), between 1976-1980 and 2003-2004 the percent of overweight young people in the United States more than doubled. In 2003-04, 18.8% of children (6-11 years old) and 17.4% of adolescents in this country were overweight.<sup>1</sup> In California, 14.2% of adolescents were overweight in 2005 -- almost three times the Healthy People 2010 goal of 5%.<sup>2</sup>

Overweight youth are at risk for a number of health problems throughout their

lives. In their youth, overweight children and adolescents are at increased risk for type 2 diabetes and are more likely than other young people to have risk factors associated with cardiovascular disease, including high blood pressure and high cholesterol levels.<sup>3</sup> Social pressures related to being overweight can also contribute to low self-esteem, which can reduce overall quality of life.<sup>4</sup> Overweight young people are also more likely to become obese adults. Up to 80% of overweight children and adolescents may become obese in adulthood.<sup>5</sup>

A number of individual and environmental factors contribute to overweight. When young people eat more calories than they expend through physical activity, they can gain weight and become overweight. This imbalance in calories used and consumed is influenced by individual and environmental factors, many of which are inter-related. Individual factors that can contribute to overweight include genetic susceptibility and unhealthy behaviors, including eating large portion sizes and consuming high-calorie foods and beverages, not being physically active enough, and spending too much time being sedentary (e.g., watching television, playing video games and working on the computer).<sup>6</sup> Unhealthy eating and physical activity behaviors are often influenced by social and environmental factors at home

and in school and community settings, including limited access to affordable, healthy foods, few safe places and/or opportunities to be physically active, and inadequate role modeling of healthy eating and activity behaviors by adults and peers in these environments.<sup>6</sup>

To support healthy growth and development, public health recommendations suggest that children should: engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity most, preferably all, days of the week; limit time spent being sedentary (e.g., children's total electronic media time, including television viewing time, should be no more than 1 to 2 hours a day); and eat a balanced, nutritious, age-appropriate diet that includes reasonable portion sizes, a variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, low fat dairy, and limits sugar, salt and fat.<sup>7,8,9</sup> Yet in 2003, about half (47%) of California children (9-11 years old) did not get the recommended 60 or more minutes of physical activity on a typical weekday and more than three-quarters (76%) did not eat an adequate amount of fruits and vegetables (i.e., 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables).<sup>10</sup>

To help children establish lifelong healthy activity and eating behaviors, it is important to introduce them to fun, engaging, positive physical activity

experiences and healthy eating patterns early in life. To make this possible, policies and programs should be developed and implemented that increase young people's access to healthy foods and safe, positive opportunities to be active at school (during and after school), at home, and in their communities.

### How to measure and interpret childhood bodyweight

Being overweight is most commonly determined by using a person's weight and height to calculate a number called the "body mass index" (BMI). For most young people, BMI is a good indicator of body fatness. Although BMI is calculated the same way for children and adults, the interpretation of the BMI number for young people and adults is different. (1) For more information about calculating and interpreting BMI for children, go to the CDC's website: [http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/childrens\\_BMI/about\\_childrens\\_BMI.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/childrens_BMI/about_childrens_BMI.htm)

#### Data Sources: Childhood Overweight

##### Text

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## Tables

Tables 1-3: Overweight data are from the California Department of Education (CDE), Standards and Assessment Division, 2005-06 California Physical Fitness Report. Retrieved November 20, 2006 from <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/> Free-reduced priced meal eligibility data are from the CDE's 2005/2006 Meal Report. Retrieved February 17, 2007 from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sh/sn/documents/free0506aielem.doc>

The overweight analyses are based on data from the Body Composition portion of the CDE Physical Fitness Test, which uses several methods to evaluate children's body composition: (1) body mass index (BMI), calculated from measured height and weight; (2) body fatness using triceps skin fold thickness or bioelectrical impedance. For this report, students were considered "overweight" if their body composition (i.e., BMI or body fatness) was higher than the "Healthy Fitness Zone," a range developed by The Cooper Institute to indicate the minimum level of fitness thought to provide some protection from health risks associated with inadequate fitness. The Healthy Fitness Zone for the body composition test differs from the commonly used Centers for Disease Control and Prevention definition of overweight, which is BMI-for-age at or above the 95th percentile. (For more information about the Healthy Fitness Zone, see the CDE Physical Fitness Test - Report Definitions at [http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/PhysFitness/gls\\_pft\\_hfz.asp](http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/PhysFitness/gls_pft_hfz.asp)) Note: The CDE's aggregate data for the number of students tested and the percent of students outside of the Healthy Fitness Zone on the body composition test were used by CHAPE to calculate the number of overweight students. Because the CDE includes "partially tested students" in the total number of students tested, the number of overweight students calculated by CHAPE may be overestimated.

In Table 1, students from Brentwood and Contra Costa County Office of Education districts were not listed separately but are included in the County totals. In Table 3, the following kinds of students were not listed separately but are included in the County totals: Cambodian students (due to small sample size) and 511 fifth graders who did not identify their race/ethnicity.