



The CDPH Challenges Youth to “Get Healthy”

Special points of interest:

- In Ohio 15% of children have been identified as being obese (YRBSS, 2011)
- In Cleveland, OH, 42% of children who visited recreation centers were identified as being overweight or obese (The “Get Healthy” Survey, 2012)
- Some practical solutions to reduce the burden of childhood obesity include:
 - 1) Better health education
 - 2) More PE programs in schools and recreation centers
 - 3) Healthier school environments

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A Cleveland Department of Public Health Data Brief

The “Get Healthy” Survey: An Overview

During the summer of 2012 the City of Cleveland implemented a nutrition program to provide fresh fruit and vegetable smoothies, free of charge, to children 18 years of age and younger throughout 10 of its community recreation centers on the east and west side of Cleveland. The program was implemented to encourage youth to make better dietary choices along with increased physical activity in order to prevent and reduce childhood obesity.

As a part of the program children were provided educational information and resources for making better food choices



and increasing daily physical activity levels.

A unique feature of the program allowed the children to take part in the preparation of the smoothies. Allowing the children to be involved during the preparation phase helped to empower children on their capabilities of preparing a quick, easy, and healthy snack.

The program successfully delivered more than 12,000

smoothies to youth visiting the centers from May until August.

In order to evaluate the impact of the program, a survey was made available to all youth willing to participate during the implementation of the program.

The survey was administered under a post-test design to descriptively assess youth behaviors which included physical activity levels, variety of healthy food options chosen, avoiding unhealthy food options, and planned future healthy habits. All data collected was self-reported. More than 100 participants took part in completing the survey.

Participant Demographics

- ◆ The average age of the participants was 14 years
- ◆ 52% of the participants were female and 48% of the participants were male
- ◆ 70% of the participants were Black, 10% were White, 3% were Asian, and less than 1% were American Indian/Alaskan Native⁺
- ◆ 10% of the participants were of Hispanic or Latino origin
- ◆ 42% of the participants were identified as being overweight or obese (≥ 85th percentile for BMI, based on sex and age specific reference data from the 2000 CDC growth charts)
- ◆ 22% of the participants were identified as being obese (≥ 95th percentile for BMI, based on sex and age specific reference data from the 2000 CDC growth charts)
- ◆ 24% of the participants were from Glenville Rec, 17% were from Cudell Rec, 16% were from Lonnie Burten Rec, 11% each were from Estabrook, Halloran, and JFK Recs, 10% were from Gunning Rec, and less than 1% were from the Michael Zone Rec⁺

⁺The summation of percentages may not equal 100%, due to rounding or omission of selected categories for meaningful analysis.

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Current Physical Activity

- ◆ 91% of children indicated that they had played hard enough to sweat (e.g., playing sports) during the week the survey was administered
 - ◆ 92% of children indicated that they did extra exercise (e.g., walking to school) during the week the survey was administered
 - ◆ 62% of children indicated that they spent **less** than 2 hours watching television or playing video games on most days of the week during the week the survey was administered
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Current Dietary Behaviors-Healthy Choices

- ◆ 82% of children indicated that they ate bright colored vegetables (e.g., carrots, broccoli) during the week the survey was administered
 - ◆ 47% of children indicated that they ate vegetables every day of the week during the week the survey was administered
 - ◆ 63% of children indicated that they ate fruits every day of the week during the week the survey was administered
 - ◆ 61% of children indicated that they drank low-fat milk during the week the survey was administered
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Over the past three decades, childhood obesity rates in America have tripled, and today, nearly 1 in 3 children in America are overweight or obese.

(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)



Current Dietary Behaviors-Avoiding Unhealthy Choices

- ◆ 65% of children indicated that they said “no” to giant or super-sized meals during the week the survey was administered
- ◆ 97% of children indicated that they drank water when they became thirsty during the week the survey was administered
- ◆ 57% of children indicated that they drank sugary drinks (e.g., Snapple, Gatorade) **less** than 2 times per week during the week the survey was administered
- ◆ 62% of children indicated that they ate french fries **less** than 2 times per week during the week the survey was administered
- ◆ 58% of children indicated that they ate cookies, chocolate, or candy **less** than 2 times per week during the week the survey was administered

Future Physical Activity

- ◆ 92% of children indicated that they would play sports or ride a bike
- ◆ 89% of children indicated that they would walk or run until they began to sweat
- ◆ 70% of children indicated that they would dance to a radio or cd player
- ◆ 64% of children indicated that they would turn off the television



Future Dietary Behaviors-Healthy Choices

- ◆ 93% of children indicated that they would choose bright colored vegetables and fruits (e.g., carrots, broccoli)
- ◆ 86% of children indicated that they would eat vegetables every day
 - * On average children indicated they would eat vegetables 2 times per day
- ◆ 96% of children indicated that they would eat fruits every day
 - * On average children indicated they would eat fruits 3 times per day
- ◆ 65% of children indicated that they would drink low-fat milk

African-American and Hispanic communities are disproportionately impacted by childhood obesity. Nearly 40% of these children are overweight or obese, compared to 32% of all children nationally. (Leadership for Healthy Communities)



Future Dietary Behaviors-Avoiding Unhealthy Choices

- ◆ 71% of children indicated that they would say “no” to giant or super-sized meals
- ◆ 93% of children indicated that they would drink water when they become thirsty **instead** of sugary drinks
- ◆ 73% of children indicated that they would eat junk food once a week or not at all
- ◆ 63% of children indicated they would **stop** eating candy or only have a bite-sized piece

Smoothie Satisfaction Feedback

- ◆ 90% of children indicated that they liked how their smoothie tasted
- ◆ 82% of children indicated that they felt they could prepare their smoothie on their own or with the help of an adult
- ◆ 72% of children indicated that they would drink a smoothie **instead** of eating junk food or candy
- ◆ 89% of children indicated that they would drink a smoothie again within the next week during the week the survey was administered

The CDPH Mission Statement



The Cleveland Department of Public Health (CDPH) is the local public health agency for the City of Cleveland. Formally established in 1910, the department is charged with improving the quality of life in the City of Cleveland by promoting healthy behavior, protecting the environment, preventing disease, and making the City a healthy place to live, work, and play. The Cleveland Department of Public Health is made of a range of programs providing clinical, environmental, health promotion, and population-based services.

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Discussion

The childhood obesity epidemic in America has been a growing concern over the past three decades. Currently, nearly 1 in 3 children are obese.¹ Obesity is caused by eating too many calories and not being physically active enough on a regular basis. Many factors in our current society have helped contribute to the obesity epidemic among children including, lack of physical activity in schools, limited access of healthy and affordable foods, increased portion sizes, and television/media.² Obesity can have

many adverse health impacts and costly medical treatments. Children who are obese risk developing high blood pressure and high cholesterol levels, which are primary risk factors for cardiovascular disease.³ Additionally, children may suffer from breathing problems, joint problems, type 2 diabetes, and psychological problems.³ Furthermore, children who are obese are likely to become obese adults and their obesity during adulthood is likely to be more severe.³ In order to prevent childhood

obesity communities can expand fruit and vegetable consumption in schools (e.g. salad bars), support daily physical education in schools, increase access to free drinking water, and create safe neighborhoods while increasing access to parks and recreation centers.⁴ While there is no simple solution for solving the childhood obesity epidemic; making healthy food choices and physical activity environments that are easily accessible options to children and their parents is an important first step.



References

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