

Findings suggest small increase in obesity among US teens in recent years

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This is an image of a weight scale. Credit: CDC/Deborah Cartagena

Among U.S. children and adolescents 2 to 19 years of age, the prevalence of obesity in 2011-2014 was 17 percent, and over approximately the last 25 years, the prevalence has decreased in children age 2 to 5 years, leveled off in children 6 to 11 years, and increased among adolescents 12 to 19 years of age, according to a study appearing in the June 7 issue of *JAMA*.

Previous analyses of obesity trends among children and [adolescents](#) showed an increase between 1988-1994 and 1999-2000, but no change between 2003-2004 and 2011-2012, except for a significant decline among children 2 to 5 years of age. Cynthia L. Ogden, Ph.D., of the National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Hyattsville, Md., and colleagues investigated trends in the prevalence of obesity and [extreme obesity](#) in children and adolescents age 2 to 19 years with measured weight and height in the 1988-1994 through 2013-2014 National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys (NHANES). Obesity was defined as a [body mass index](#) (BMI) at or above

the sex-specific 95th percentile on the CDC BMI-for-age growth charts; extreme obesity was defined as a BMI at or above 120 percent of the sex-specific 95th percentile on these charts.

Measurements from 40,780 children and adolescents (average age, 11 years; 49 percent female) between 1988-1994 and 2013-2014 were analyzed. Among children and adolescents 2 to 19 years of age, the prevalence of obesity in 2011-2014 was 17 percent and extreme obesity was 5.8 percent. Trends in child and [adolescent obesity](#) varied by age. During the approximately 25-year period, the prevalence increased until 2003-2004 but then decreased among children age 2 to 5 years (9.4 percent in 2013-2014). Among children 6 to 11 years of age, the prevalence increased until 2007-2008 and then leveled off (17.4 percent in 2013-2014). Among adolescents age 12 to 19 years, obesity prevalence increased between 1988-1994 (10.5 percent) and 2013-2014 (20.6 percent).

Trends in extreme obesity prevalence showed no change between 1988-1994 and 2013-2014 among children age 2 to 5 years, whereas it increased among [children](#) age 6 to 11 years (4.3 percent in 2013-2014) and among adolescents [age](#) 12 to 19 years (9.1 percent in 2013-2014).

No significant changes in either obesity or extreme obesity were seen between 2005-2006 and 2013-2014, suggesting any recent changes among adolescents were small.

More information: *JAMA*, [DOI: 10.1001/jama.2016.6361](#)

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