

# Childhood Obesity Facts-At a glance

- Approximately 1 in 5 U.S. children and adolescents have obesity.
- Obesity affects some groups more than others, including adolescents, Hispanic and non-Hispanic Black children, and children in families with lower incomes.
- Health care for obesity is expensive for patients and the health care system.



## Many U.S. children have obesity

From 2017 to March 2020, the prevalence of obesity among U.S. children and adolescents was 19.7%<sup>1</sup>. This means that approximately 14.7 million U.S. youths aged 2–19 years have obesity.

For children, obesity is defined as having a [body mass index \(BMI\)](#) at or above the 95th percentile for age and sex.

## Obesity affects some groups more than others

The prevalence of obesity increased with age. From 2017 to March 2020, obesity prevalence was 12.7% among U.S. children 2–5 years old, 20.7% among those 6–11, and 22.2% among adolescents 12–19.<sup>[1]</sup>

Overall, obesity prevalence was highest in Hispanic children (26.2%) and non-Hispanic Black children (24.8%) followed by non-Hispanic white (16.6%) and non-Hispanic Asian (9.0%) children.<sup>[1]</sup>

Among U.S. girls, obesity prevalence was highest among non-Hispanic Black girls (30.8%). Among U.S. boys, obesity prevalence was highest among Hispanic boys (29.3%).<sup>[1]</sup>

Obesity prevalence increased as family income decreased. Obesity prevalence was:

- 11.5% among U.S. children with family income more than 350% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).
- 21.2% among children with family income 130% to 350% of FPL.
- 25.8% among children with family income 130% or less of FPL.<sup>[1]</sup>

## **Obesity data among young children**

CDC works with the US Department of Agriculture to analyze obesity data for U.S. children enrolled in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). [Learn more about WIC and view recent trends.](#)

## **Health care for obesity is expensive**

Health care for obesity is expensive for patients and the health care system. In 2019 dollars, the estimated annual medical cost of obesity among U.S. children was \$1.3 billion. Medical costs for children with obesity were \$116 higher per person per year than for children with healthy weight. Medical costs for children with severe obesity were \$310 higher per person per year than for children with healthy weight.<sup>[2]</sup>

## **Related information**

### [Adult Obesity Facts](#)

Information about obesity among adults in the U.S.

### [About Child and Teen BMI](#)

What BMI is, how it is used, and how it is interpreted.

### [Child and Teen BMI Calculator](#)

Calculate BMI, BMI percentile, and BMI category for children and adolescents 2–19

<https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/childhood-obesity-facts/childhood-obesity-facts.html#print>

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