



Prevalence of Childhood Overweight in Chicago

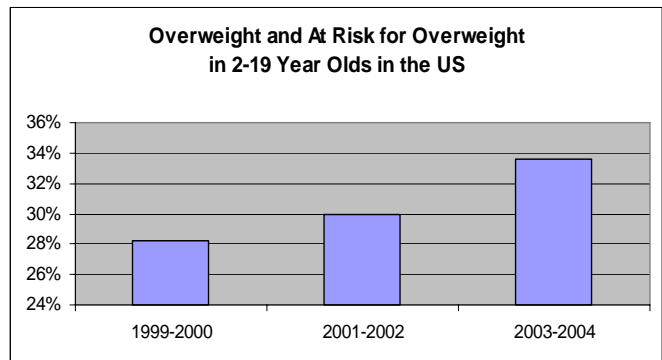
This fact sheet summarizes what is known about the percentage of children who are overweight or obese (prevalence) in the US, Illinois and Chicago. This fact sheet also offers ideas for addressing the problem locally.

For children 2-18 years, weight status is based on Body Mass Index (BMI) percentile for age and sex.* A child is *overweight* with a BMI at or above the 95th percentile. A child is *at risk for overweight* with a BMI between the 85th – 94th percentiles. Possible health consequences for overweight children include early high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

** The BMI is a measurement that compares weight to height (the formula is [weight in kilograms/(height in meters)²]. Percentile indicates how a child compares to other children the same age and sex. So a child at the 95th percentile for BMI has a BMI higher than 94 of every 100 similar children; one with a BMI at the 85th percentile has a BMI higher than 84 of every 100 similar children.*

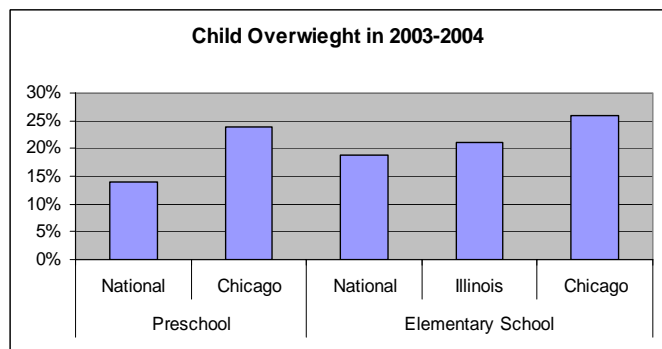
More children are overweight these days

Child overweight has been increasing in recent years. This graph illustrates the increase from 1999-2004 in the percent of children who are overweight or at risk for overweight in the United States. (Data source: Ogden et al, 2006)



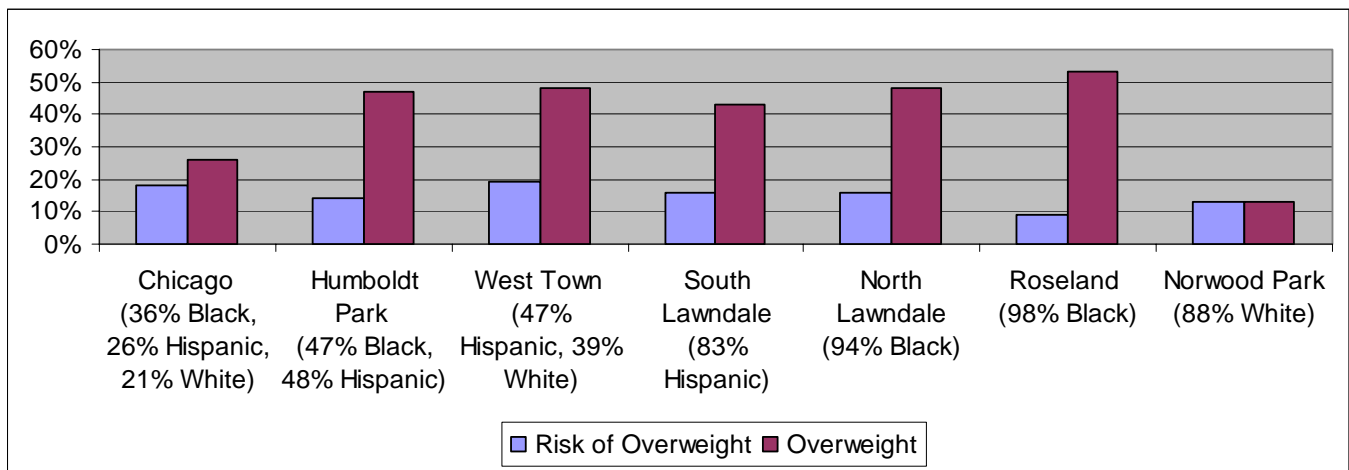
More Children are Overweight in Chicago

Many more children in Chicago are overweight or are at risk of overweight than in the nation or the overall state of Illinois. (Data source: Ogden et al, 2006; Mason et al, 2006; IDPH, 2006)



The burden of child overweight varies in different parts of Chicago

Children living in low-income communities of color in Chicago are more likely to be overweight.
 (Data source: Whitman et al, 2004)



What causes child overweight?

Most simply stated, children are overweight when they eat more calories than they burn through physical activity (in play and exercise). This is easy to explain, but hard to change because there are so many factors involved. Foods like fruits and vegetables may be more expensive or unavailable in certain communities. Safe spaces for children to play outside the home may be hard to find due to traffic or crime. Some communities have few affordable healthy lifestyle programs for families and children. As we recognize these and other factors, we can begin to address them and make it easier for families to help children achieve better calorie balance ...and so more normal growth and weight.

What can we do about it?

Teaching children and families about healthy eating and physical activity is necessary but not enough. We also need to make changes in schools and daycare settings - places where children spend a lot of time - to promote healthy food and plenty of activity. Communities need to make changes to support families by increasing healthy food and activity options. Changes in public policies can help communities to make these changes by providing resources and guidelines for local programs.

For information and resources to support these important changes, visit CLOCC's website, www.clocc.net.

¹ Ogden CL, Carroll MD, Curtin LR, McDowell MA, Tabak CJ, Flegal KM. Prevalence of overweight and obesity in the United States, 1999-2004. *JAMA* 2006; 295(13):1549-1555.

² Mason M, Meleedy-Rey P, Kaufer Christoffel K, Longjohn M, Garcia MP, Ashlaw C. Prevalence of overweight and risk of overweight among 3- to 5-year-old Chicago children, 2002-2003. *J Sch Health* 2006; 76(3): 104-110

³ Healthy Smiles Healthy Growth, 2003-2004. Springfield, IL; Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), 2006.

⁴ National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES III) 1988-1994. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

⁵ Whitman S, Williams C, Shah A. Sinai Health System's Community Health Survey: Report 1. Chicago, IL: Sinai Health System, 2004. Available at <http://www.sinai.org/urban/publications/FINAL%20Report%201%20v3.pdf>, accessed 5 Sept, 2006.