

Houston Students: How Healthy Are They?



We've heard the statistics. Our kids are overweight and obese. They don't eat enough healthy foods. They need to move more.

But how do Houston students stack up against students across Texas and the U.S.?

By numerous measures, Texas children are the least healthy in the nation—and Houston's children fare even worse.

According to the Commission to Build a Healthier America, "Texas ranks 51st among states and the District of Columbia based on the size of the gap in children's general health status by family income." While nearly 22.8% of Texas children enjoy less than optimal health (the highest level in the United States, where the national average is 15.9%), only 6.7% of higher-income Texas children experience less than optimal health—the largest gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots" in any state.*

Moreover, says the Commission, "In Texas, the general health status of children in every income, education, and racial or ethnic group did not meet the national benchmark."

Overweight and obesity

Percentage of youth** who are ...	U.S.	Texas	Houston
overweight	15.8	15.6	17.7
obese	13.0	15.9	16.7
either overweight or obese	28.8	31.5	34.4

Eating habits

Percentage of youth** who ...	U.S.	Texas	Houston
drink less than 3 glasses of milk per day	85.9	88.8	91.8
drink soda or pop at least once a day	33.8	37.8	29.9
eat fruits and vegetables less than 5 times a day	78.6	82.6	82.9
do <i>not</i> eat vegetables at least once per week:			
green salad	35.9	42.6	48.3
potatoes	30.9	35.6	40.8
carrots	53.7	60.9	58.6
other vegetables	17.6	20.4	29.9
do <i>not</i> eat fruit at least once a week	14.7	16.0	19.8

Physical activity

Percentage of youth** who ...	U.S.	Texas	Houston
do <i>not</i> meet recommended levels of physical activity (at least 60 minutes of activity 5 days a week)	65.3	54.8	71.1
do <i>not</i> attend P.E. class at least one day per week when school is in session	46.4	47.7	44.0
do <i>not</i> attend P.E. class daily when school is in session	69.7	59.5	85.6
play on at least one sports team	56.3	57.7	52.5
watch TV for more than 3 hours a day	35.4	38.5	42.8
use computer for non-school work or play video games for more than 3 hours a day	24.9	23.7	24.0

*Source: *America's Health Starts with Healthy Children: How Do States Compare?*, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Commission to Build a Healthier America, October 2008. Available at: http://www.commissiononhealth.org/Documents/ChildrensHealth_Chartbook.pdf

**Youth are defined as students in grades 9-12. Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *2007 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System*. Available at: www.cdc.gov/yrbss