

## What is EAT 2010?

*EAT 2010 (Eating and Activity among Teens) is a University of Minnesota study that was designed to learn about eating and activity among teens, what influences these behaviors, and how close these behaviors are to meeting national health guidelines.*

*EAT 2010 staff came to your school during the 2009-2010 school year and surveyed students in selected health, physical education, and science classes. Students completed three questionnaires, one covering factors that may influence health behaviors, one exploring physical activity participation, and one aimed at quantifying nutrient intake. Students also had their weight and height measured privately by EAT 2010 staff.*

*We greatly appreciate your school's participation in the study and we would like to share some of our findings with you and your school staff. If you have any questions regarding the information in this newsletter, please contact the Project Director, Dr. Nicole Larson at 612-625-5881 or [larsonn@umn.edu](mailto:larsonn@umn.edu).*

## Who participated?

- 2,793 students across 20 schools in the Minneapolis and Saint Paul School Districts
- Gender: 53% females; 47% males
- Grade level: 46% middle school; 54% high school
- Mean age: 14.4 years
- Race: 29% African American/Black, 20% Asian American, 19% Caucasian, 17% Hispanic, 4% Native American, 11% other/mixed

*EAT 2010 was directed by Dr. Dianne Neumark-Sztainer, a professor at the University of Minnesota. Funding for EAT 2010 was provided by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, National Institutes of Health.*



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## Time for



## breakfast

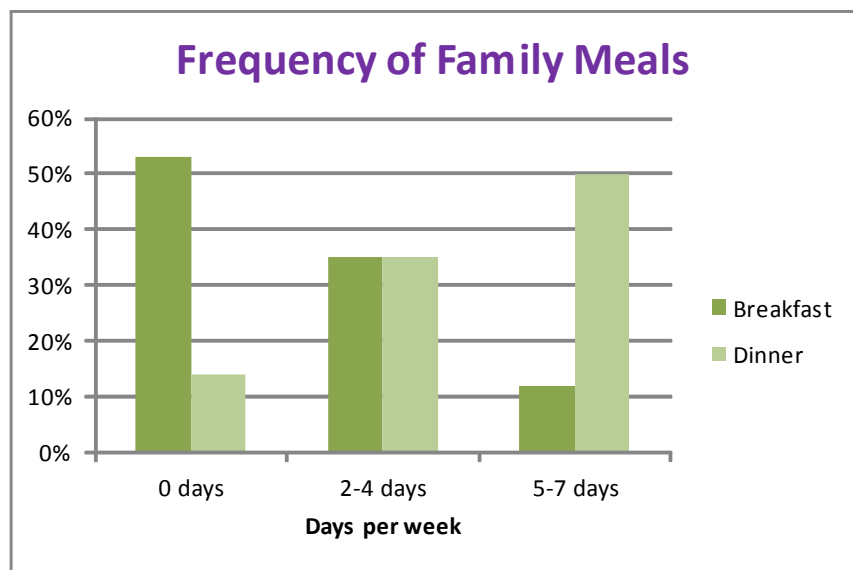
*Eating breakfast has been linked to better academic performance and overall dietary intake, and may also contribute to maintenance of a healthy weight.*

*During the week of the survey, only 37% of students reported eating breakfast every day. Another 30% reported eating breakfast 3-6 days a week, but 11% of students never ate breakfast.*

## Family meals are not a thing of the past

*Several studies have found that teens who eat regular family meals have better psychosocial health, academic outcomes, and nutrition. For example, in previous Project EAT studies we found that teens who ate regular family meals consumed more fruit, vegetables, and calcium than their peers not reporting regular family meals, and drank significantly fewer sweetened beverages. Coming together for mealtimes can be challenging given the busy schedules of teens and their parents, but many families are making them happen!*

*Students reported eating with their families an average of 4.4 times per week. Eating breakfast as a family was less common than eating together at dinner time, but some families do eat breakfast together.*



## Staying active

*Physical activity has numerous benefits, including better cardiovascular health, stronger bones, and improved mental health and mood. The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommend that adolescents do 60 minutes or more of physical activities every day.*

*On average, students reported participating in 2.6 hours of mild activity, 2.8 hours of moderate activity, and 3.0 hours of vigorous activity in a typical week. Just over 50% of students reported meeting the current guidelines by participating in at least seven hours of physical activity per week.*

## Media use



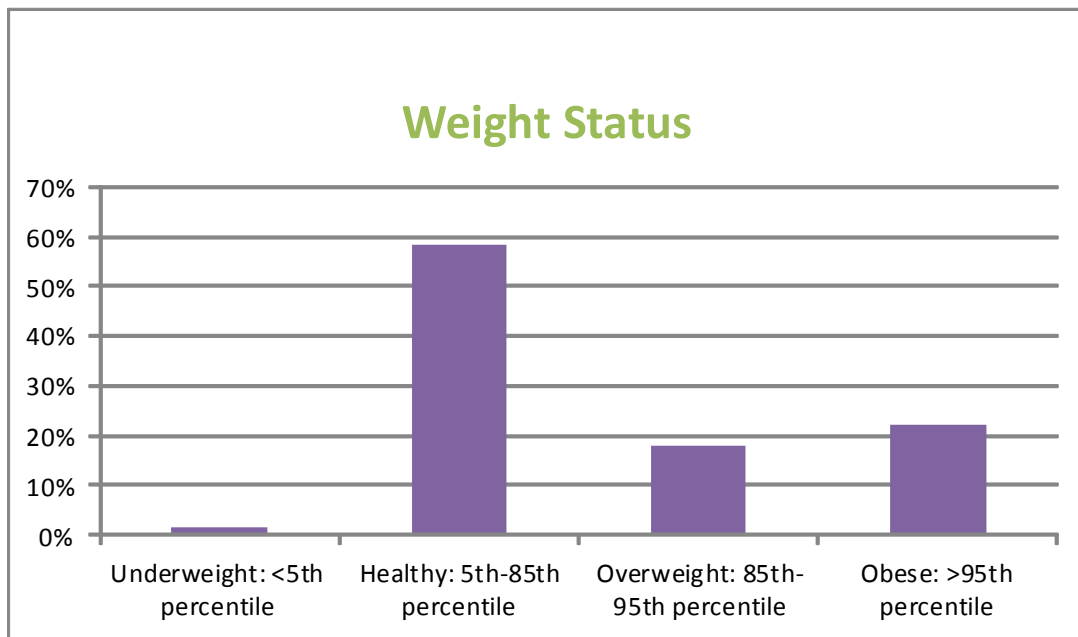
While students were fairly active, they reported watching TV and videos for an average of 17.2 hours per week. In addition, students reported spending an average of 14.6 hours using a computer for non-homework activities and 8.3 hours playing video games in a given week.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that teens limit their screen time, including TV and video watching, computer use and video games, to no more than two hours on an average day.

Approximately 85% of students exceeded this recommendation and reported more than 14 hours of screen time in a given week; 47% reported more than 35 hours of screen time.

## Overweight and obesity: A challenging problem

Obesity is a major public health concern impacting teens today. Approximately 18% of students who participated in EAT 2010 were overweight and 22% were obese. National public health initiatives aim to reduce the proportion of teens who are obese to only 16% by 2020, so the current figures indicate much work is needed.



The categorization of students as underweight, healthy, overweight, or obese was based on age- and sex-specific definitions developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (see [http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/childrens\\_bmi/about\\_childrens\\_bmi.html](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/childrens_bmi/about_childrens_bmi.html)).

## Dieting and weight-related concerns

Weight-related concerns such as poor body image and unhealthy weight control behaviors are common among teens. As much attention has been directed toward obesity in recent years, questions exist about the potential impact on other weight-related problems such as binge eating and poor body image. EAT 2010 was able to compare the survey data collected to previous survey data collected at schools in the metropolitan area during the 1998-1999 school year.

Although prevalences of unhealthy weight control behaviors were high in 2010, we saw some improvements. For example, fewer girls reported unhealthy weight control behaviors in 2010 than in 1999. Way to go!! Let's keep working to see even more improvements.

## EAT 2010

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## Peer teasing

*Teasing about weight and appearance has been linked to poor body image, low self-esteem, symptoms of depression, thinking about and attempting suicide, and increased use of unhealthy weight control behaviors. On the EAT 2010 survey, students reported on how often they were teased about their weight, appearance, race, and family's financial status.*

*While the majority of youth reported never being teased about any of these factors, 42% reported being teased about one or more factors at least once a year (11% were teased at least once a week). Teasing about weight and appearance was most common; 31% of students reported being teased because of their weight/appearance at least once per year (8% were teased at least once a week).*

*Thanks again  
for your  
participation!*

## Implications

*There is a compelling need for programs and policies aimed at the prevention of obesity and unhealthy dieting behaviors. Schools in the Minneapolis and Saint Paul Public School Districts have strong wellness policies already in place and many schools reported additional efforts to promote healthy eating and physical activity. However, most school administrators also reported ongoing concerns regarding students being overweight, consuming more healthy foods and beverages, and getting more physical activity. Schools can continue to help by promoting physical activity and healthy eating behaviors through classroom policies, school meals, and educational activities. Schools can also help by trying to decrease unhealthy behaviors and attitudes among students by changing the social environment at school. This can be done by having school policies and practices that promote low tolerance of weight-related teasing, teaching students that weightism is prejudice, promoting student activism around weight stereotypes, both over and underweight, and by involving students and families in education around healthy eating and healthy weight maintenance. Previous Project EAT studies have informed the development of several programs aimed at the prevention of obesity and unhealthy dieting behaviors. For example, New Moves is an ongoing program ([www.newmovesonline.com/](http://www.newmovesonline.com/)) that was designed to promote increased physical activity, healthy eating behaviors, and a positive self-image among sedentary adolescent girls.*