

**SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST**

June/July 2015

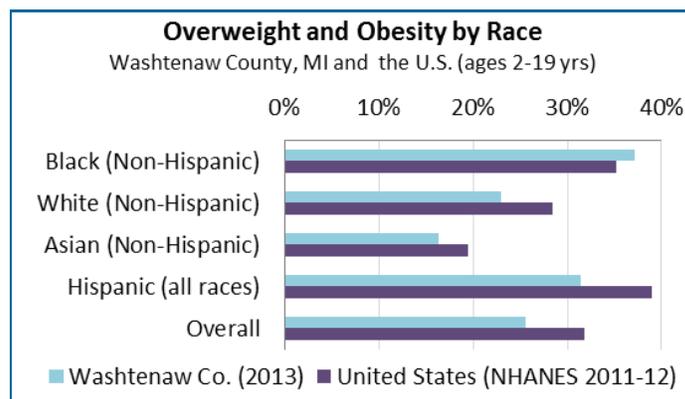
- Being overweight or obese in childhood increases the risk of obesity and other chronic diseases in adulthood
- 26% of children in Washtenaw County, ages 2-17 years, are overweight or obese
- Decreasing the rate of childhood obesity is a national, state and local priority
- Washtenaw County Public Health is partnering with local health systems to gather and analyze childhood obesity data and disseminate community reports

## Childhood Obesity in Washtenaw County

The Washtenaw childhood obesity surveillance project began in 2013. Through the Health Improvement Plan (HIP) collaborative, Washtenaw County Public Health worked with St. Joseph Mercy Health System and University of Michigan Health System to create the first Washtenaw Child Body Mass Index (BMI) Dataset. The health systems contributed measured height and weight data from electronic health records for over 18,000 children, ages 2-17 years old, living in Washtenaw County. Public Health compiled and analyzed the data and created community data reports. The analysis focused on factors known to affect the risk of childhood obesity, including poverty, race and ethnicity and age.

### Key Findings:

- **Children who grow up in poverty are more likely to be overweight.** Medicaid coverage is an indication of poverty. The risk of overweight and obesity was higher for children with Medicaid across all age groups and compared to children covered by commercial insurance.
- **Some minorities experience higher risk of obesity.** Washtenaw children as a whole have a lower rate of overweight and obesity than those nationally. However, local children of African American descent surpass national rates.
- **Children in different races and ethnicities age with distinct risk patterns.** Caucasian teenage boys have a higher risk than girls of being overweight, particularly in middle school.
- **Where a child lives can affect risk of being overweight.** Ann Arbor zip codes show lower rates compared to the southeast region of Washtenaw County, especially Ypsilanti (48197 and 48198), Milan (48160), Whittaker (48190) and Willis (48191).
- **Good progress is being made in low-income children enrolled in the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program.** Rates of overweight and obesity in low-income WIC children declined between 2010 and 2014 (from 28% to 24% of WIC children age 2-4 years). The addition of peer educators to support local WIC moms in breastfeeding and changes in the WIC food package may have supported this trend.



### What is WCPH doing to address this issue?

- Our surveillance system is the first in Michigan and a potential model for other counties. Future data will allow us to track progress of initiatives aimed at moving all children to a healthier weight.
- We added a new Maternal and Child Health Epidemiologist position to increase capacity to work with community and health system partners.
- Obesity has been identified as a priority area for our Community Health Improvement Plan. With our partners, we are implementing policy and programmatic strategies related to healthy vending, healthy foods in schools, Safe Routes to Schools, nutrition and physical activity standards in child care settings and more.

### For more information:

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