



## A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

### *Early Weight Watching*

*Prevalence of Obesity among Youth by Household Income and Education Level of Head of Household — United States, 2011-2014*

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[Announcer] *This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

[Dr. Kathleen Dooling] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Kathleen Dooling.

Obesity is a major public health problem in the U.S.—and not just for adults. Children now struggle with obesity more than any previous generation. Obesity among young people has more than *tripled* since the early 1970s.

Dr. Cynthia Ogden is with CDC's National Center for Health Statistics. She's joining me by phone today to discuss obesity in children. Welcome to the show, Cynthia.

[Dr. Ogden] Thanks. I'm glad to be here.

[Dr. Dooling] Cynthia, how is obesity defined?

[Dr. Ogden] In children, obesity is defined using the CDC growth charts—the growth charts that parents see when they go to the pediatrician. And the cutoff for obesity is the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile on the BMI for Age growth chart. And BMI is weight for height—weight adjusted for height.

[Dr. Dooling] How many children in the U.S. are considered obese?

[Dr. Ogden] In 2015-2016, about 13 million youth two to 19 were obese, and that's about 18.5 percent of the population.

[Dr. Dooling] What health problems are associated with obesity?

[Dr. Ogden] In children, there are immediate consequences of obesity, and they include low self-esteem, depression, high blood pressure, and even, in some cases, diabetes. A main concern of childhood obesity though is that it tracks to adulthood. And in adulthood, obesity is associated with high blood pressure, cancer, diabetes, and even premature death.

[Dr. Dooling] What are some strategies for maintaining a healthy weight?

[Dr. Ogden] There are great resources for parents on maintaining a healthy weight, both at the American Academy of Pediatrics and at CDC. Maintaining a healthy weight is related to balancing what we eat and drink with how physically active we are. The CDC recommends consuming plenty of fruits and vegetables and water, and limiting sugar sweetened beverages. CDC also recommends paying attention to portion sizes and increasing physical activity.

[Dr. Dooling] Where can listeners get more information about achieving a weight for children?

[Dr. Ogden] Listeners can check with their healthcare provider and look at the website [healthychildren.org](http://healthychildren.org) where there's a lot of great information about nutrition and healthy snacks.

[Dr. Dooling] Thanks, Cynthia. I've been talking today with Dr. Cynthia Ogden about obesity in children. Developing healthy habits early in life can help prevent obesity. Eat a diet high in fruits and vegetables, drink water instead of sweetened beverages, and get regular physical activity—these are the most effective ways for children, and parents, to maintain a healthy weight.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Kathleen Dooling for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

*[Announcer]* For the most accurate health information, visit [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.