



Ohio Department of Health
246 N. High Street
Columbus, OH 43215

www.odh.ohio.gov

News Release

John R. Kasich / Governor
Theodore E. Wymyslo, M.D. / Director



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 25, 2012

Contact: Office of Public Affairs 614.644.8562

STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RELEASES BMI SCREENING RESULTS

Data should be used at individual level; not as statewide health indicator

Columbus, OH – The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) today released the [first report on Body Mass Index \(BMI\) screenings of Ohio’s school children](#). Senate Bill 210 of the 128th General Assembly requires school districts to conduct individual-level BMI screenings each year for all students in kindergarten, third, fifth and ninth grades and report the findings to ODH. The report uses data submitted by 213 school districts and nonpublic schools for the 2010-2011 school year. Approximately 686 of the more than 1,800 education entities chose not to provide data and opted out of the program. Of the children that were screened, nearly 35 percent were considered overweight or obese.

“While this data is quite useful at the individual level, it should not be used alone to draw any far-reaching conclusions,” said Dr. Ted Wymyslo, director of the Ohio Department of Health. “Just as routine vision or hearing screenings for students indicate if they are at risk for barriers to learning, we hope that early identification of risk factors for obesity will spark a conversation with parents and healthcare providers.”

The small sampling of screening results is similar to certified and weighted statewide surveillance data used in ODH’s [“Report on the Body Mass Index of Ohio’s Third Graders, 2004-2010.”](#) Both BMI surveillance and screening data provide valuable, but different, health information. BMI screening is used to identify children at risk for weight-related problems and includes referral for additional testing or follow-up. ODH’s 3rd grade BMI surveillance program provides public health officials with important data to monitor trends and changes in a population that can be used to develop and implement policies and strategies on improving child health.

“We have been partnering with schools for many years to get high-quality surveillance data that give us a statewide snapshot of the health of our children,” said Dr. Andrew Wapner, Chronic Disease Medical Director at ODH. “Hopefully, these partnerships will continue so schools have the information they need to help create healthy environments to help their students succeed academically.”

ODH partners with the Ohio Department of Education to work with schools and educators to ensure all children have the opportunity to learn in a healthy school environment by providing children opportunities to be physically active and making fruits and vegetables available, attractive and

affordable. Together the two state agencies provide training and support to school health professionals to successfully measure and track a range of students' key health information, including BMI.

"Schools are an important partner, but ODH is working across the state with workplaces, communities, healthcare providers, faith-based organizations, and childcare providers to help create environments for better health," added Wapner.

Families can support good health outside the classroom by:

- Eating Well: Follow the My Plate way of eating: make half your plate fruits and veggies, choose lean meats and whole grains, and choose water first.
- Being Active: Even small steps help, and working up to 30 minutes of activity every day is a great way to start.
- Living Tobacco-Free: It's hard to be active if you use tobacco. Reducing and quitting tobacco use will make your whole family healthier.
- Getting Involved: Help in your community to ensure that everyone can find healthy food and be physically active in the places where you and your family live, learn, work, pray and play.

###

About the Healthy Choices for Healthy Children Act

Ohio Senate Bill 210, known as the Healthy Choices for Healthy Children Act, became law September 17, 2010. The law contains provisions to combat childhood obesity in the next several years by increasing students' physical activity and ensuring access to healthy meals and beverages at school. The law requires school districts to provide students and their parents or guardians with information about student health. All city, exempted village, local and chartered-nonpublic schools, community schools and district-owned and operated STEM schools must conduct body mass index (BMI) screenings each year for all students in kindergarten, third, fifth and ninth grades. Districts must also report aggregate BMI data to the Ohio Department of Health by June 1 each year. Ohio Senate Bill 316 rendered the screening programs optional, with schools required to opt in to screening, and will take effect this fall.

Link to the report: <http://www.odh.ohio.gov/healthresources/reports/healthreports.aspx>

Then click on "Healthy Choices for Healthy Children Act Body Mass Index (BMI) Screening Program 2010-2011"