



## HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

# Childhood Obesity in US Increased During Pandemic

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A new study found that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a large increase in **obesity** in American children and **teenagers**.

Childhood obesity has been increasing for many years. The new study suggests that the rate of obesity quickened even more last year, especially among those who already were obese when the pandemic started.

The results signal a “**profound** increase in weight gain for kids” and are very concerning, said Doctor Alyson Goodman. She is with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and one of the authors of the study.

The pandemic appears to be making the nation’s obesity epidemic worse. Obesity can put people at risk for heart disease and high blood pressure. Overweight people are also at higher risk for severe coronavirus infection.

The CDC on Thursday released the study, which is the largest yet to look at obesity during the pandemic.

It found that about 22 percent of children and teenagers were obese last August. That is up from 19 percent from the year before. Before the pandemic, children who were a healthy weight gained an average of 1.5 kilograms a year. That rose to 2.4 kilograms during the pandemic. And for severely obese kids, expected yearly weight gain went from 4 kilograms to 6.6 kilograms.

The rate of obesity increased the highest in ages 6 to 11. Younger children are more dependent on their parents and may have been more effected when schools stopped in-person classes, the researchers said.

The research was based on an examination of medical records of more than 432,000 kids and teens, ages 2 to 19. They were weighed and measured at least twice before the pandemic and at least once early in the pandemic.

There were some limits to the study. It only included children who received medical care before and during the pandemic, the researchers said. It also did not look at the differences in weight gain between racial and ethnic groups.

Earlier this week, the CDC said there are now 16 states where at least 35 percent of the population is obese. Most are in the southern part of the country.

I'm Dan Novak.

*Mike Stobbe reported this story for The Associated Press. Dan Novak adapted it for VOA Learning English. Susan Shand was the editor.*

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## Words in This Story

**obese** — *adj.* very fat : fat in a way that is unhealthy

**teenager** — *n.* someone who is between 13 and 19 years old

**profound** — *adj.* very strongly felt

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