



# Healthy Chicago Spotlight

## Childhood Obesity

October 18, 2013

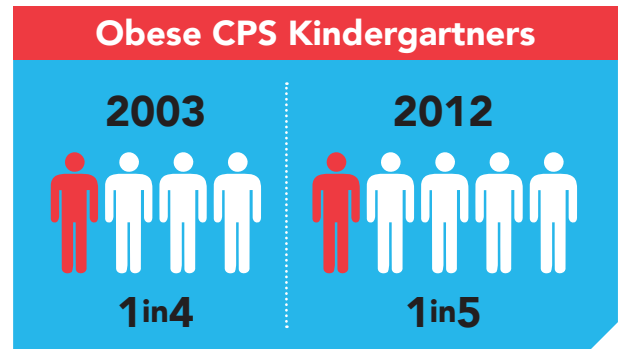
Over the past three decades, childhood obesity

has tripled across the nation, increasing our children's chances of developing chronic ailments throughout their lives. Following an aggressive campaign by the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), **new data show obesity rates among CPS's youngest students are decreasing.** In fact, over the past 10 years, obesity rates in kindergarten-aged students have dropped from 24% to 19.1%.<sup>1</sup> In 2003, nearly one in four students was obese by the time they entered school. By 2012, that number had fallen to less than one in five. This means that over 1,000 children started the school year in 2012 at a healthier weight than they would have in 2003.

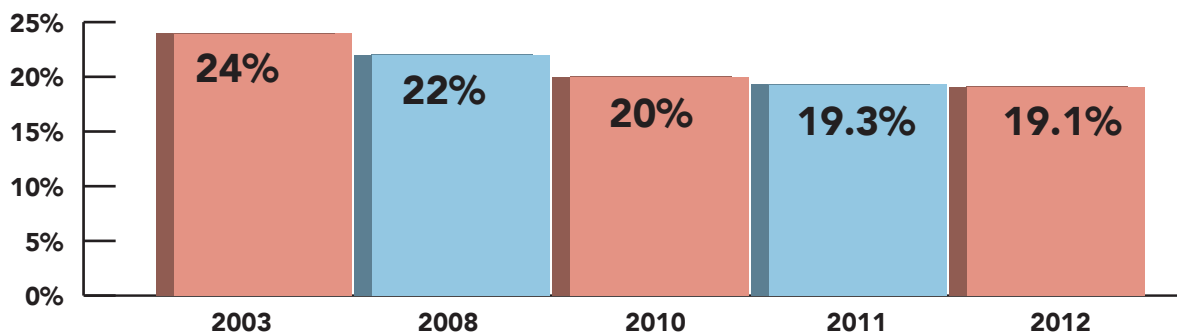
Improvements are being seen in kindergartners from all ethnic groups including those that face disproportionate rates of obesity nationwide. In 2010, 24.9% of Hispanic CPS kindergartners and 17.4% of African American CPS kindergartners were obese. By 2012, both numbers had dropped to 23.7% and 16.5% respectively.

Though these numbers indicate improvement, there is still more work to be done. Obesity rates for CPS kindergartners still exceed both the Illinois (14.6%) and national obesity rates (12.1%) for similarly-aged children.<sup>2</sup>

Shortly after taking office Mayor Emanuel launched **Healthy Chicago**,<sup>3</sup> the first comprehensive public health agenda for the city. Healthy Chicago prioritizes obesity reduction, providing **strategies for children to get and stay healthy in their schools, neighborhoods, parks and homes.** Building off Healthy Chicago, CDPH partnered with CPS to launch the Healthy CPS Action Plan,<sup>4</sup> providing 60 more strategies specific to improving the health, safety and well-being of Chicago's students.



### Obesity Rate Declines for Kindergarten-aged Chicago Youth



Obesity is defined as age- and sex-specific BMI greater than or equal to 95th percentile according to 2000 CDC growth charts. Sources: 2003,2008: CLOCC. Sampling methodology included 3-7 year old children, CPS and Archdiocese of Chicago students\*. 2010,2011,2012: CPS kindergartners, adjusted for non-response. All data obtained via measurement. See reference 5 for full methodology discussion.

# One thousand CPS students started school this year at a healthier weight than ten years earlier

**PlayStreets:** CDPH partners with local organizations to host more than 60 PlayStreets in select Chicago communities. In 2013, more than 11,000 Chicago youth and their parents participated in activities geared to help them get and stay active.



## Selected Strategies to Reduce Childhood Obesity

Below are highlights of Chicago's work to combat childhood obesity as part of both Healthy Chicago and Healthy CPS.

**Standardized P.E. Curriculum**, across all grade levels, ensuring all CPS schools meet or exceed improved requirements for student activity.

**Increased Access to Healthy Food Options** through a Citywide campaign including bringing both mainstream grocers and fresh produce carts to food deserts, where families have historically had no access to healthy food options.

**PlayStreets** providing new opportunities for youth and their families to engage in structured, fun physical activities in their own neighborhood.

**Child Center Guidelines** developed and implemented by CDPH improving nutritional and physical activity standards at 1,400 Childcare centers around the City.

**Improved Nutritional Standards** affecting 14.2 million breakfasts and 47.6 million lunches served annually to CPS students.

**CPS Healthy Snack and Beverage Policy** guaranteeing all snacks during the school day are of high nutritional value.

**Guaranteed Recess Time** restored for the first time in 30 years at all city schools, providing students necessary time to engage in physical activity and play, proven to improve both student health and learning.

**Surveillance Partnership** providing a new data sharing agreement between CDPH and CPS to better monitor and analyze trends in childhood obesity, helping both agencies and partners to track successes and challenges moving forward.

As a result of these efforts and more, Chicago was recognized by the National League of Cities in 2012 for its accomplishments in reducing childhood obesity and its work through First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! Initiative. In 2013, Mayor Emanuel was awarded the inaugural Playful City USA Leadership Award for the City's efforts to ensure all children have access to play and physical activity.



For more information on Healthy Chicago and these efforts, visit



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1. Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children (CLOCC). Data show rates of obesity for Chicago children at school entry fell from 2003 to 2008 while still double the national average [Press release]. 2010. [http://www.clocc.net/news/CLOCC\\_Data\\_R\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.clocc.net/news/CLOCC_Data_R_FINAL.pdf).

2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Vital signs: obesity among low-income, preschool-aged children- United States, 2008-2011. MMWR. 2013;62(31):629-634.

Illinois rates: 2-4 year old low-income children, *Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance System, 2009.* "National rates: 2-5 year old children, *National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 2009-2010.*

3. Chicago Department of Public Health. Healthy Chicago: Transforming the Health of Our City. <http://www.cityofchicago.org/content/city/en/depts/cdph/provdrs/healthychicago.htm>.

4. Chicago Department of Public Health. Healthy CPS: An Agenda for Student Wellness. <http://www.cityofchicago.org/content/dam/city/depts/cdph/CDPH/HealthyCPSFeb272013.pdf>.