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STUDY REVEALS MORE THAN HALF OF OVERWEIGHT AND OBESE CHILDREN DO NOT RECEIVE FOLLOW-UP INSTRUCTIONS ON THEIR WEIGHT FROM THEIR PEDIATRICIAN

Experts advise more aggressive efforts are needed to ensure uniform follow-up

KANSAS CITY, MO – October 14, 2011 – A new study from researchers at [Children's Mercy Hospitals and Clinics](#) in Kansas City, Mo., found that while pediatricians are consistent in taking weight-related history and creating treatment plans for overweight and obese children, more than half of these children (55%) do not receive follow-up instructions on their weight. The research was presented today at the [American Academy of Pediatrics National Conference and Exhibition](#) in Boston.

Current recommendations advise that primary care providers counsel obese children and their families for obesity prevention and treatment during routine visits and schedule follow-up visits as often as each month. However, most children are not being asked to follow-up with their physicians about their weight, and further opportunities for guidance are being missed.

"These results are concerning because it means a significant percentage of children are not receiving the support and counseling they need to prevent the onset of adult obesity and some of its serious complications," said Kerri Wade, PNP-BC, a nurse practitioner on staff at the Children's Mercy [Promoting Health in Teens and Kids Weight Management Clinics](#) and lead author of the study. "Research has demonstrated that more frequent patient contact is associated with improved weight status. The more often we can intervene, the more likely we'll be able to get these at-risk patients on a healthier path."

Researchers from Children's Mercy reviewed medical charts from a sample of 1,193 overweight and obese children ages 2 to 12 years old who were seen for well child visits at the hospital in 2010. The majority of files included documentation of nutritional history (95%), physical activity history (74%) and treatment approach (90%).

Older children with an obesity diagnosis more likely to receive counseling

The study also found that older children and children diagnosed with obesity were significantly more likely to have follow-up plans documented. Additionally, children diagnosed as obese (those with a BMI at or greater than the 95th percentile for age and gender) are more likely to receive follow-up instructions versus overweight children (those with a BMI between the 85th and 94th percentiles).

“It may be that pediatricians were more concerned about heavier, older children because other studies have shown that obese older children are more likely to carry their extra weight into adulthood,” said Wade. “For intervention to work, we have to aggressively seek uniformity in provider counseling practices and encourage regular follow-up. We also need to give healthcare providers the tools they need to give practical, individualized support to each patient.”

The staff at the Children’s Mercy [Promoting Health in Teens and Kids Weight Management Clinics](#) are currently working with the [National Initiative for Children's Healthcare Quality \(NICHQ\)](#) on a national effort – [“Collaborate for Healthy Weight”](#) – to develop tools for improving obesity diagnosis, prevention and treatment. Additionally, the initiative plans to collect data about the effectiveness of weight management programs, which will be used to facilitate ongoing professional counseling.

About Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics

[Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics](#), located in Kansas City, Mo., is one of the nation’s top pediatric medical centers. The 314-bed hospital provides care for children from birth through the age of 18, and has been recognized by the American Nurses Credentialing Center with Magnet designation for excellence in nursing services, and ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* as one of “America's Best Children's Hospitals” in all 10 specialties they rank. Our faculty of 600 pediatricians and researchers across more than 40 subspecialties are actively involved in clinical care, pediatric research and educating the next generation of pediatric subspecialists. For more information about Children’s Mercy and its research, visit [childrensmercy.org](#) or download our mobile phone app *CMH4YOU* for all phone types. For breaking news and videos, follow us on [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) and [Facebook](#).