

Perspectives on Pediatric Obesity Survey Findings

Executive Summary

There appears to be a gap in parents' understanding of the full extent of repercussions for overweight children. While parents agree that seeking medical attention for children with conditions such as diabetes symptoms or asthma is very important, they are far less emphatic that medical attention is needed for overweight children. Nearly all parents indicate that they would seek medical attention if their child had a medical condition that would lower his or her life expectancy, increase health care costs, or affect his or her ability to walk and play; yet fewer parents would seek medical attention for an overweight child.

Parents are supportive of treatment for overweight children, with three out of four parents supporting moderate interventions such as outpatient treatment or weight loss camp; there is much less support for extreme interventions such as weight loss surgery and medication.

While parents see themselves as having, by far, the greatest impact against childhood obesity, schools have the potential to partner with parents in this fight. Parents are more likely to name schools as an institution with a potential impact in preventing childhood obesity than health care providers, grocery stores, restaurants or community organizations. In a similar vein, parents trust the judgment of their children's teachers, with nine out of ten saying they would seek medical attention for their child if the child's teacher indicated that a health condition existed. There is widespread support among parents for policies requiring physical education, recess, and wellness support in schools, as well as a call for avoiding unhealthy foods as part of school fundraisers. Parents are similarly supportive of government policies promoting healthy eating and physical activity, but less supportive of taxes on soda and "junk" food.

Methodology

This survey was conducted online between August 1 and 5, 2011 using the omnibus services of Toluna.

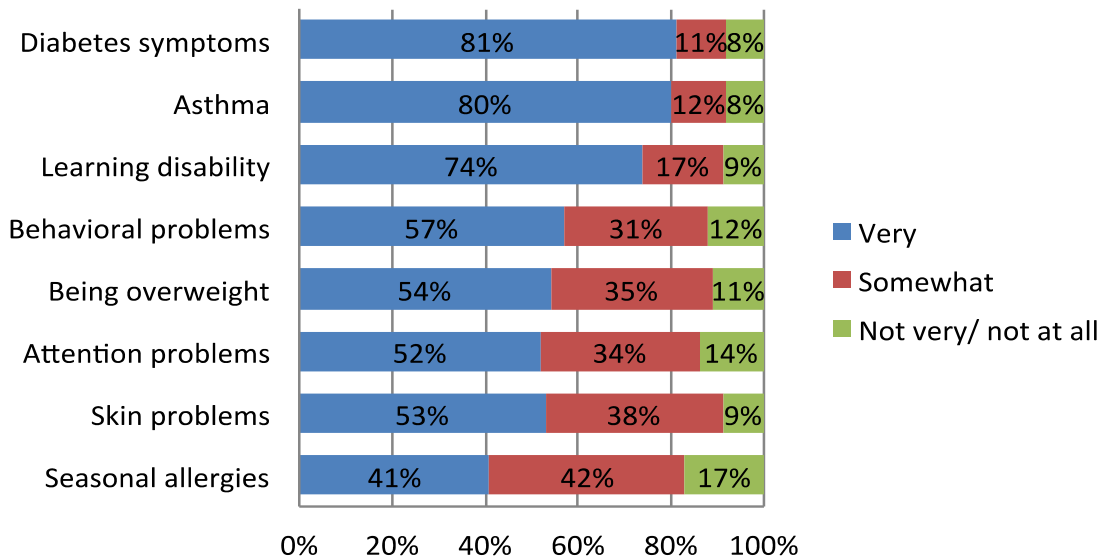
The study was conducted among a national sample of 2,179 American adults, including 728 parents. The total sample is balanced to be representative of the US adult population in terms of age, gender and region. The margin of error for the total sample of 2,179 adults is $\pm 2.0\%$; the margin of error for the sample of 728 parents is $\pm 3.6\%$.

Key Findings

Just over half of parents believe that seeking medical attention would be “very important” for an overweight child.

- The vast majority of parents consider it “very important” to seek medical attention for a child with diabetes symptoms (81%), asthma (80%) or a learning disability (74%).
 - However, just 54% of parents say it would be “very important” to seek medical attention for a child who was overweight—on par with behavioral problems (57%), attention problems (52%) or skin problems (53%).

Importance of Seeking Medical Attention for Children Varies by Medical Condition

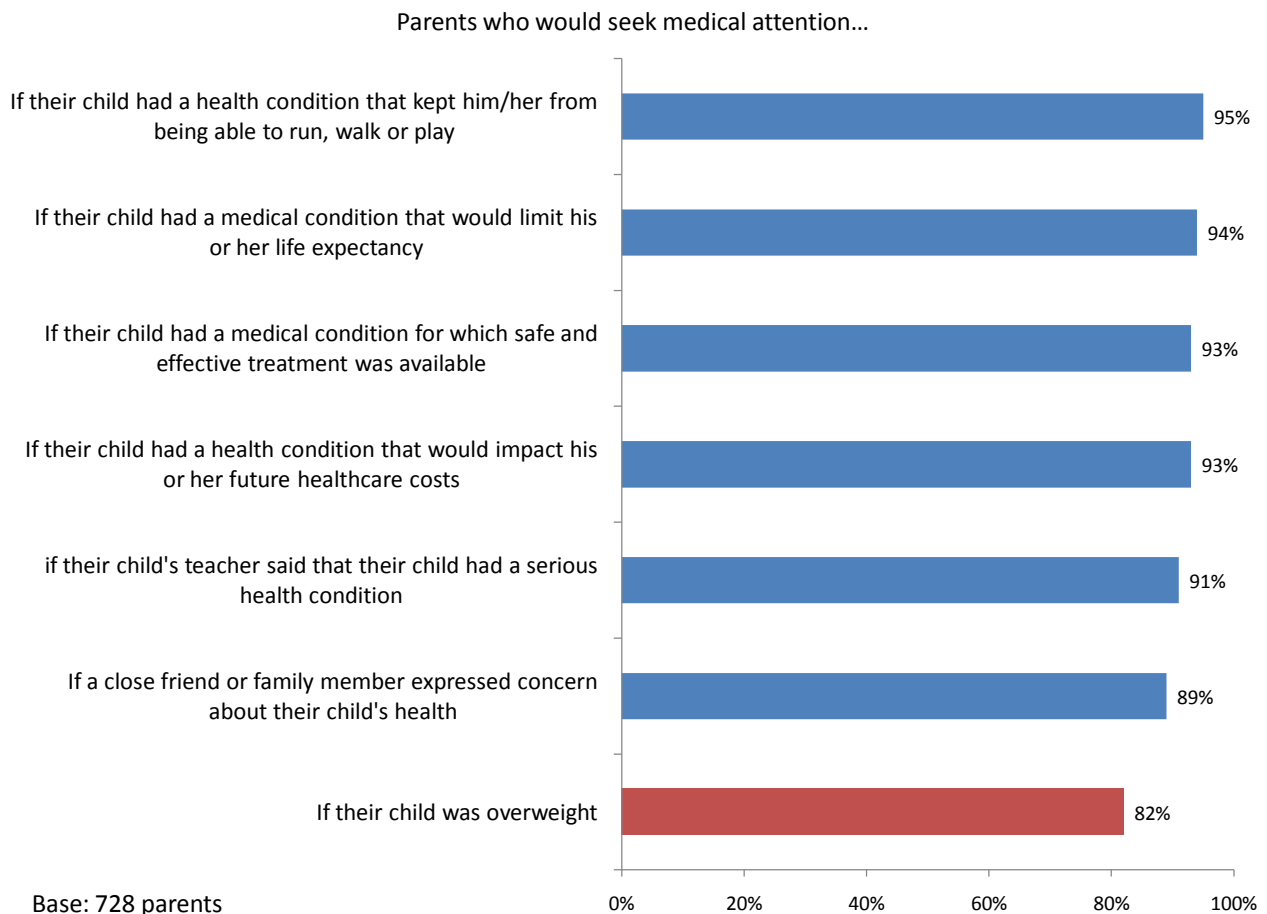


Base: 728 parents

Parents are nearly unanimous that they would seek medical attention for a condition that impacted their child's life expectancy, ability to play or future health care costs; but fewer parents connect being overweight with these repercussions.

- Nearly all parents agree that they would seek medical attention if their child had a medical condition that kept him or her from being able to run, walk or play (95%), if a child had a medical condition which would limit their life expectancy (94%) or impact their future health care costs (93%). Similarly, 93% would seek medical attention if their child had a medical condition for which safe and effective treatment was available (93%).
 - However, far fewer parents (82%) would seek medical attention if their child was overweight.

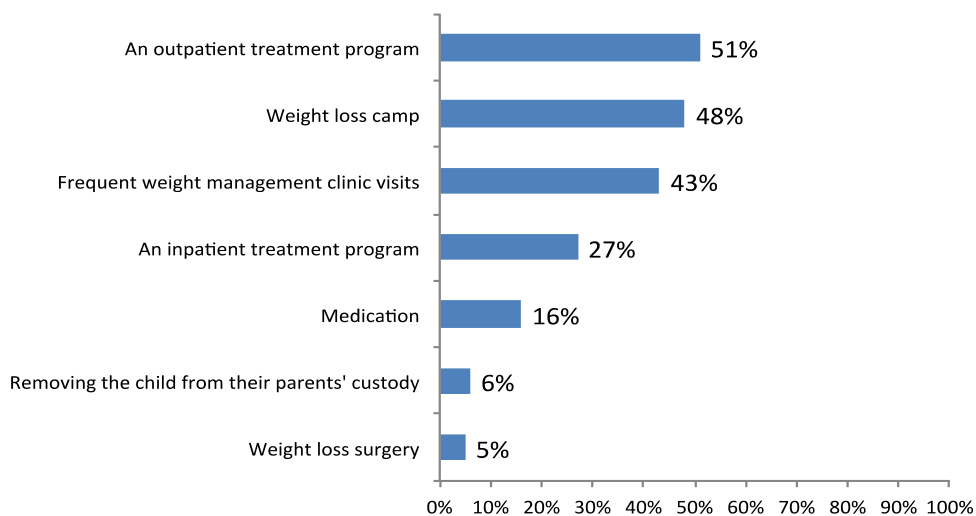
There is a Disconnect in When Parents Would Seek Medical Attention



Support for extreme weight loss interventions for children is limited.

- Three-quarters (77%) of parents support moderate interventions for overweight children, such as outpatient groups, frequent clinic visits or weight loss camps.
 - However, just four in ten (38%) parents support extreme interventions such as inpatient treatment, surgery, medication or removing an overweight child from his or her parents' custody.
- Parents and non-parents both tend to be more supportive of moderate than extreme interventions for overweight children. Both groups had similar levels of support for interventions including outpatient groups (parents 51%, non-parents 55%), weight loss camp (parents 48%, non-parents 48%) or frequent weight management clinic visits (parents 43%, non-parents 42%).
- Extreme interventions are less popular among both parents and non-parents; however, parents are more likely than non-parents to advocate weight loss surgery (5% vs. 3%) or removing an overweight child from their parents' custody (6% vs. 4%). A quarter (27%) of both parents and non-parents support inpatient treatment programs for overweight children, while 16% of parents and 14% of non-parents support medication as a treatment option for overweight children.

Parents Support Moderate Interventions for Overweight Children

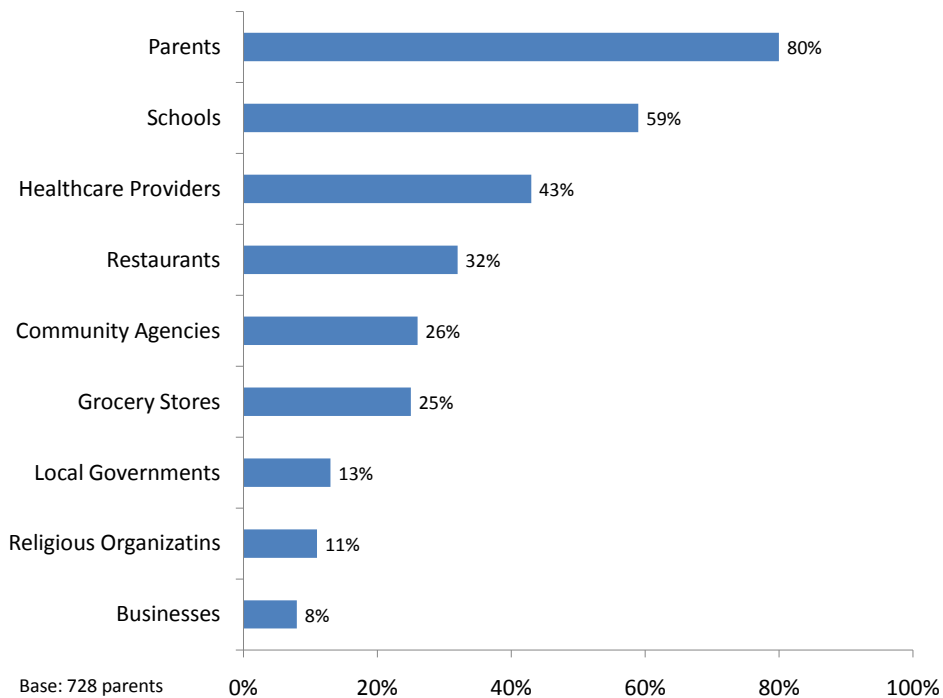


Base: 728 parents

Parents see themselves as having the greatest ability to prevent childhood obesity; there is potential for schools to be a partner in prevention.

- Both parents and non-parents are most likely to name parents as the group with the greatest potential impact in preventing childhood obesity (parents 80%, non-parents 82%). Parents are significantly more likely than non-parents to name schools (59% vs. 54%), grocery stores (25% vs. 21%), and local government (13% vs. 10%) as having a potential impact in preventing childhood obesity.
- Parents also see religious organizations (11%) and businesses (8%) as having a minimal impact against childhood obesity.

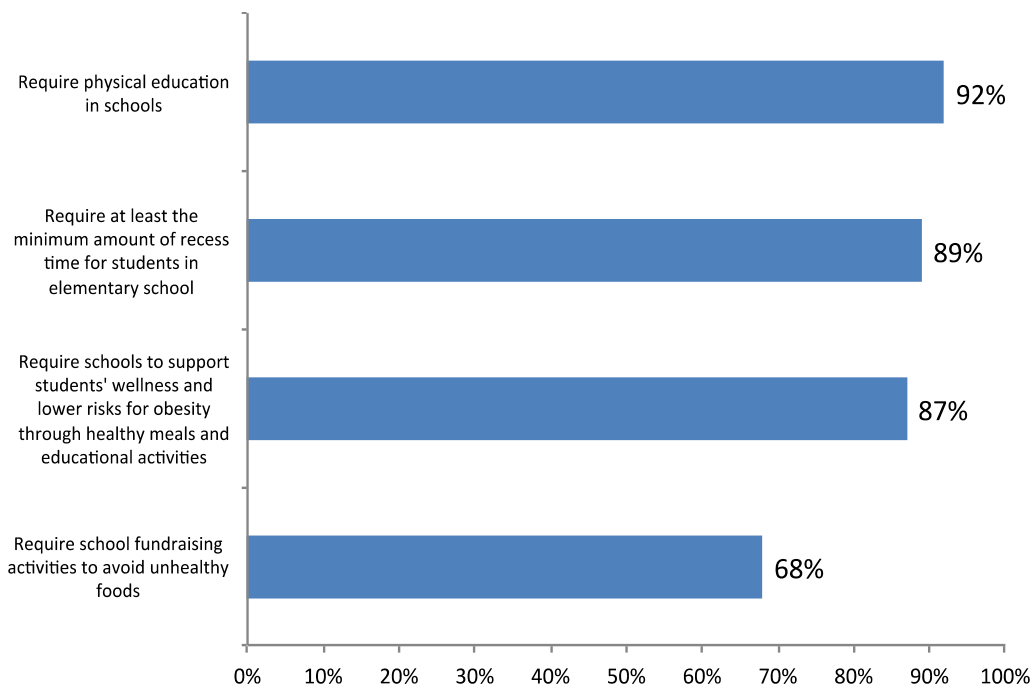
Parents Believe They have the Greatest Potential Impact in Preventing Childhood Obesity



Parents tend to support policies around schools' roles in combating obesity.

- Parents are significantly more likely than non-parents (83% vs. 80%) to support school-related policies, including:
 - Requiring physical education in schools (92% vs. 89%)
 - Requiring schools to support students' wellness and lower risks for obesity through healthy meals and educational activities (87% vs. 84%)
 - Require school fundraising activities to avoid unhealthy foods (68% vs. 62%)
 - Parents and non-parents are equally supportive of requiring at least the minimum amount of recess time for students in elementary school (parents 89%, non-parents 87%).

Parents Support Requirements on Schools to Fight and Prevent Obesity



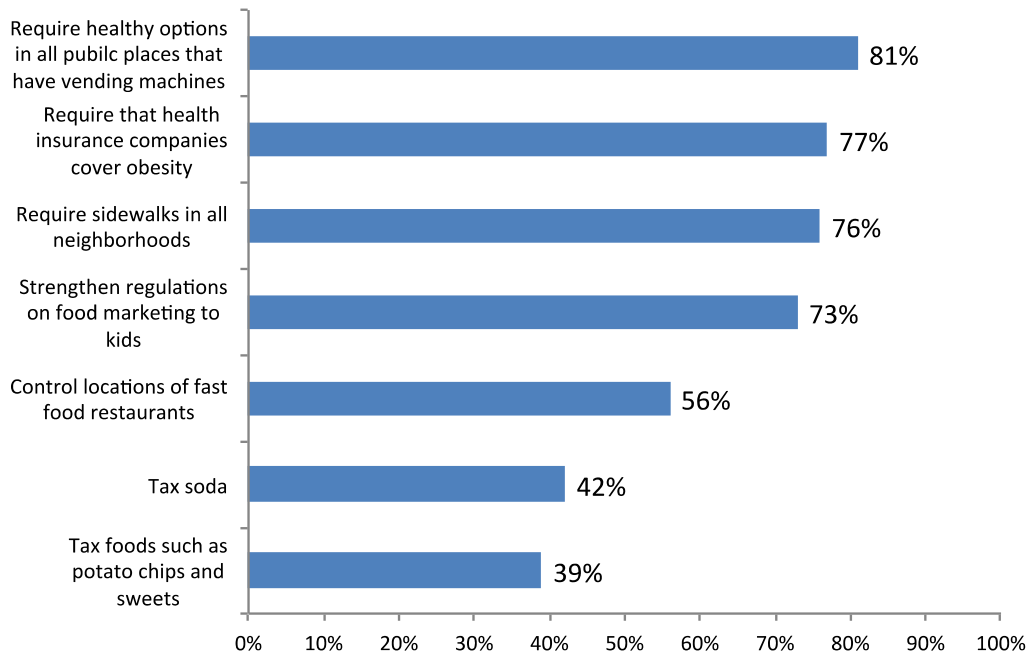
Base: 728 parents

Parents widely support policies to prevent and combat childhood obesity, but there is less support for “junk food taxes.”

- Parents are significantly more supportive than non-parents of several proposed measures to address childhood obesity, including:
 - Require healthy options in all public places that have vending machines (81% vs. 77%)
 - Require that health insurance companies cover obesity treatment (77% vs. 69%)
 - Require sidewalks in all neighborhoods (76% vs. 62%)
 - Strengthen regulations on food marketing to kids (73% vs. 67%)
 - Control locations of fast food restaurants (for example, limiting placement near schools) (60% vs. 54%)

- Parents are significantly more likely than non-parents to support taxing foods such as potato chips and sweets (39% vs. 32%) and soda (42% vs. 35%) as a way to address childhood obesity.

Parents Support Policy Changes to Combat Childhood Obesity



Base: 728 parents