



OVERWEIGHT CHILDREN IN CALIFORNIA COUNTIES & COMMUNITIES, 2004

MERCED COUNTY

THE PROBLEM

The California Center for Public Health Advocacy analyzed the 2004 California Physical Fitness Test of 5th, 7th and 9th graders. The analysis shows that among students in Merced County:

- **33.6% of children were overweight.**
- **Overweight rates in cities in Merced County range from 31.2% in Merced to 39.8% in Los Banos.**
See page 2 for city specific data.

THE EFFECT

- **Overweight children face a greater risk of developing many health problems during childhood,** including type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma, orthopedic problems and gallstones, as well as low self-esteem, poor body image, and depression.
- **Overweight children are more likely to be obese as adults,** putting them at a much higher risk for heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes later in life.
- **Overweight, obesity and physical inactivity are estimated to cost California \$28 billion during 2005** for medical care, worker's compensation, and lost productivity.

WHAT CAN BE DONE

To address the epidemic of overweight children, state and local leaders must address the conditions in schools and communities that contribute to this crisis and that undermine parents' efforts to protect their children's health. The California Center for Public Health Advocacy recommends the following actions:

- Implement healthy food and beverage standards for products sold in schools and other public facilities.
- Ensure quality physical education for all children in grades K-12.
- Eliminate advertising of unhealthy foods and beverages on public property.
- Make school recreation facilities available for after-hours use.
- Ensure public access to all public facilities that provide physical activity programs.
- Provide financial incentives that bring grocery stores and recreation facilities to low-income communities.
- Provide safe roadway access for walking and biking.
- Require health insurance to cover nutrition counseling and physical activity.

NOTES: The term overweight as used in CCPHA's analysis of the California Physical Fitness Test data is based on assessment standards described in CCPHA's report, *The Growing Epidemic: Child Overweight Rates on the Rise in California Assembly Districts*, released in August 2005.

Support for this project was provided by a grant from The California Vitamin Cases Consumer Settlement Fund.

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The California Center for Public Health Advocacy is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization established by the Northern and Southern California Public Health Associations.

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Merced County

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Merced County

Overweight Students in Merced County By Gender and Grade

	Merced County	California
All Students Tested	33.6%	28.1%
GENDER		
Girls	27.5%	22.0%
Boys	39.2%	33.9%
GRADE		
5 th Graders	34.1%	29.3%
7 th Graders	34.0%	29.1%
9 th Graders	31.9%	25.4%

Overweight Students in Cities & Communities in Merced County*

Community Name	Total Students Tested in 5 th , 7 th , & 9 th Grades	Overweight (%)
Atwater	1,808	32.2
Los Baños	1,826	39.8
Merced	4,359	31.2

* Includes only cities and communities with a population of at least 10,000 and a total enrollment of 5th, 7th, and 9th graders of at least 1,000. The population data are from the 2000 Census; the enrollment data are from the California Department of Education 2003-2004 public school enrollment data.

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