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New Research Briefs Examine Latino Youth Obesity Epidemic

Salud America!, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) based at the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, has released a comprehensive collection of [research briefs](#) examining the obesity epidemic among Latino children and teens.

Three new national briefs review current evidence with respect to Latino youth in these areas: the availability of healthy, affordable foods; opportunities for physical activity; and the impact of food marketing on diets and obesity rates.

These briefs also provide policy recommendations, including:

- Bringing healthy foods into neighborhoods and schools should particularly focus on Latino communities, as they are disproportionately affected by the epidemic.
- Policies that can help people be physically active in their neighborhoods should emphasize Latino populations because they are more likely to live in areas that do



Download 3 National Research Briefs:

- [Influence of Media on Overweight and Obesity Among Latino Youth](#)
- [Addressing Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity Among Latino Youth](#)
- [Physical Activity, Overweight and Obesity Among Latino Youth](#)

Download 20 Grantee Research Briefs:

- [List of Grantee Briefs](#)

not support such activity.

- Efforts to reduce exposure to unhealthy food and beverage marketing should consider that Latino youth are particularly targeted by advertisers.
- Health programs and messages should be culturally sensitive, relevant for all populations and produced in both English and Spanish.

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Director's Corner

Letter to members from Dr. Amelie Ramirez

A few years ago, Latino economist Dr. José A. Pagán wanted to investigate how a lack of health insurance could impact not just the ability of someone who was uninsured to get care, but also the ability of those who did have insurance to get care.

In short, how does uninsurance impact the insured?

As a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health & Society Scholar from 2003-05, Pagán gained new access to health care systems and experts who could help him explore these questions.

Pagán eventually made several important [discoveries](#), including that higher uninsurance rates coincided



Amelie Ramirez

with higher rates of unmet medical needs among those with insurance.

After his scholar fellowship, he established a population health policy institute at the University of Texas-Pan American and launched research projects on uninsurance and Latina breast cancer. He continues to research insurance and health issues as professor and chair of health management and policy at the University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth.

Pagán is a superb example of the benefits of becoming a RWJF Health & Society Scholar.

The RWJF scholars [program](#) aims to build the nation's capacity for research, leadership and policy change to address the multiple determinants of population health.

Each year it enables up to 12 people who have completed their doctoral training to engage in an intensive two-year fellowship at one of six prominent universities.



José A. Pagán

I am honored to have recently joined the national advisory committee for the RWJF Health & Society Scholars Program to help review and select scholar finalists.

Be sure to check the scholar [website](#) for application details

Amelie G. Ramirez, Dr.P.H.

Director, *Salud America!*
Director, Institute for Health Promotion Research
UT Health Science Center at San Antonio



News Brief

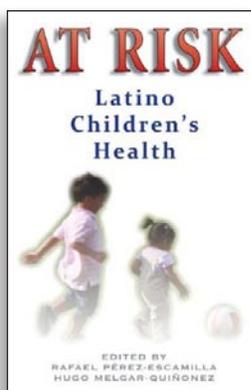
At-Risk: Latino Children's Health

A new book, *At Risk: Latino Children's Health*, includes 10 essays examining Latino social and economic issues and their effect on Latino children's health.

The essays cover a wide range of topics, including: environmental issues such as unsafe housing, poor access to healthy foods and lack of safe playgrounds in low-income neighborhoods; the causes and effects of obesity and ways to prevent it; and more.

The book includes a chapter, Latino Children's Health and the Environment, authored in part by Dr. Robert Garcia, a *Salud America!* advisor, Dr. Emma Sanchez-Vaznaugh, a *Salud America!* grantee, and Liz Schwarte and Mariah S. Lafleur, co-investigators on a *Salud America!* pilot research project led by grantee Dr. Carmen Nevarez. Another chapter, My Child is Not Fat, He is Just Chubby: A Latino/a Parenting Perspective, is authored in part by *Salud America!* grantee Dr. Norma Olvera. The chapter Television Viewing and Physical Activity among Latino Children is authored in part by *Salud America!* grantee Dr. Cristina Barroso.

Find the book [here](#).



Funding

Grant Listings

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research (NCCOR), and the National Latino Children's Institute (NLCI) have obesity-related funding opportunities that are seeking applications, or compile lists of funding opportunities.

[RWJF](#), [NIH](#), [NCCOR](#), [NLCI](#)

Éxito! Latino Cancer Research Training Institute and Internships

The 2012 *Éxito!* Latino Cancer Research Leadership Training application is available [here](#). *Éxito!* conducts a five-day summer institute and offers internships to encourage minority master's-level students and master's trained health professionals to pursue a doctoral degree and a career in research regarding cancer and other Latino health issues. Applications are due March 1, 2012. *Éxito!* is funded by the National Cancer Institute and led by the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, the team behind *Salud America!*

Stepping Up Against Latino Childhood Obesity

San Antonio Schools Unveiling Salad Bars in Cafeterias

Schools have a new tool in the effort to reverse childhood obesity—salad bars.

Research has shown that school children with access to a salad bar significantly increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables, says Caroline Roffidal-Blanco, a registered dietitian with the San Antonio Municipal Health District, in an interview.

That's why local schools are getting more than 100 salad bars this year.

"Students unanimously indicated they would prefer a salad bar as a healthy meal option at school," said Roffidal-Blanco of local middle- and high-school students who partook in a recent panel discussion on healthy lifestyle issues.



A salad bar at Jackson Middle School in San Antonio is one of more than 100 opening in local schools this year in an effort to make fresh food more available, [KENS-TV reports](#).

The San Antonio salad bar initiative, part of the national Let's Move Salad Bars to Schools program that aims to provide 6,000 salad bars to schools nationwide, is expected to help more than 100,000 local students eat healthier.

San Antonio now joins New York and Chicago as the cities with the most salad bars.

In addition to salad bars, the city also has a variety of other initiatives to reduce and prevent

obesity thanks to a grant from the federal Communities Putting Prevention to Work program, which supports policy and environmental changes to prevent obesity and reduce tobacco use.

Learn more about San Antonio's campaign [here](#).

Dentist Educates Hispanics on Preventing AIDS, Diabetes & More

Editor's Note: This post is part of an ongoing series on the SaludToday Blog that highlights the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's work in Latino communities across the country.

In the early days of his career—and also of the HIV/AIDS epidemic—Gabriel Rincón, DDS, spent part of his dental residency caring for AIDS patients in the final stages of their disease. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was not much information being circulated about HIV, particularly in New York City's Mexican American community, for whom the topics of sex and gender roles were taboo.

"I saw people in my community getting infected with HIV/AIDS, yet there was nothing in Spanish about the disease or how to prevent it," Rincón said.

So Rincón developed a culturally sensitive presentation to educate Mexican Americans and other Latinos about HIV, its signs and symptoms, how it is spread, and how it can be prevented. He bought an overhead projector and traveled to

restaurants, factories, and churches to give his presentation. "I talked to anyone who would listen," Rincón said.

His efforts led him to launch Mixteca Organization, Inc., which provides health and education programs to thousands of Latino New Yorkers each year.

For his undaunted quest to educate and support Latino immigrants in need, Rincón has been named one of 10 recipients of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Community Health Leaders Award. The award honors exceptional men and women who have overcome significant obstacles to tackle some of the most challenging health and health care problems facing their communities.

After a year of making his presentation on HIV/AIDS, it became clear to Rincón that his community also was severely affected

by heart disease and diabetes, so he started to educate about those issues as well. He found himself helping

Latino immigrants get access to basic health care. Nearly a decade later, in 2000, someone suggested that he turn his work into a nonprofit organization.

Today, in addition to offering a broad range of health education programs, Rincón's Mixteca provides

literacy and computer classes, English language courses, and after-school programs.

"A young man we worked with just graduated from the Rochester Institute of Technology. In order to be healthy, you have to be educated," Rincón said.

Read more about Rincón, originally from Puebla, Mexico, at the [SaludToday Blog](#) or at [NYDailyNews.com](#).



Gabriel Rincón

Grantee Corner

Editor's Note: This is a five-part series that will feature new research briefs on Latino childhood obesity issues by Salud America! grantees. These briefs analyze a wide range of issues, from the impact of menu labeling in small restaurants in Los Angeles, to how after-school programs can help Latino youth be active, to how community gardens can help lower-income Latino families eat healthier. Grantees are currently discussing their findings in their communities to influence healthy changes. Find all grantee briefs [here](#).

Meizi He



Latino Faith-Based Communities' Perspective on Childhood Obesity Prevention

In her *Salud America!* pilot research project, Dr. He conducted interviews and focus groups among church leaders and congregations to gather their insights on childhood obesity.

Key preliminary findings include:

- Latino church leaders and members perceived a link between faith and health;
- obesity-prevention efforts should be culturally sensitive; and
- there are perceived financial, environmental, cultural and lifestyle barriers to obesity-prevention programs in faith-based settings.

Latino faith-based leaders are aware of and willing to address childhood obesity among their congregations. The preliminary results of this study highlight the need for obesity prevention among Latino children and reveal the strong potential of a faith-based community as a venue and infrastructure for implementing effective obesity-prevention strategies.

Carmen Nevarez



Salud Tiene Sabor: Creating Healthy Eating Environments for Latino Families

In her *Salud America!* pilot research project, Dr. Nevarez evaluated the *Salud Tiene Sabor* program. *Salud Tiene Sabor*, the first program of its kind in California, supports healthy food choices in restaurants by providing access to healthy menu items and nutrition information, including calories posted

on menu boards. Seven independent restaurants have implemented the *Sabor* program at Mercado La Paloma, a community marketplace in South Los Angeles that serves primarily Latino residents with restaurants, shops, social services and cultural events.

Key preliminary findings include:

- customers are aware of and use nutrition information on menu boards;
- restaurant owners support the *Salud Tiene Sabor* program; and
- healthy eating options are available to Mercado la Paloma customers.

Early findings indicate that small, independently owned restaurants in low-income Latino communities can help improve local nutrition environments. They also show that Latino communities are aware of and positively influenced by menu labeling.

Claudia Galindo



Obesity Among Young Latino Children: Disparities and Changes Over Time

In her *Salud America!* pilot research project, Dr. Galindo studied factors and behaviors that may affect weight, nutrition and physical activity among Latino youth.

Key preliminary findings include:

- Latino children are more likely to be obese than White and Asian children at all points of observation;
- among Latino children from different countries and regions of origin, Central American, Puerto Rican and Mexican children have the highest obesity levels; and
- rates of obesity among Latino children decrease as socioeconomic status (SES) increases.

These preliminary results indicate that, from kindergarten through 5th grade, Latino children were more likely than their White peers to be obese, and these disparities increased with age.

Harris Huberman



Using Spanish Parenting Newsletters to Reduce Young Latino Children's Weight

In his *Salud America!* pilot research project, Dr. Huberman tested a low-cost parenting intervention to reduce rates of overweight and obesity in Latino children during the first three years of life. The intervention is built around a series

of age-paced parenting newsletters called *Primeros Pasos* in Spanish or *Building Blocks* in English (PP/BB), which are mailed monthly to families beginning at the birth of a child through age 3.

Key preliminary findings include:

- the PP/BB intervention reduced overweight during the first years of life; and
- the PP/BB intervention was also associated with reduced rate of overweight through age 3.

A PP/BB intervention beginning in a child's infancy, that utilizes culturally tailored parenting newsletters to influence parents' feeding attitudes and practices, can have a beneficial impact in reducing overweight in Latino children as they reach preschool age. This study suggests that preventive parenting approaches beginning in very early childhood—especially among Latinos—should be an element of broader obesity prevention strategies.

Research

Overweight Kids' Heart Risks Can Start as Young as Age 3

Multiethnic children as young as 3 who are overweight are already at risk for cardiovascular disease and facing a potentially dire future, according to a University of Miami [study](#).

Researchers used data from more than 3,600 children from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey to examine the relationship between elevated body mass index (BMI) and waist circumference and cardiovascular disease risk factors in 3- to 6-year-olds.

In 6-year-old black and Hispanic boys and all 5-year-old girls, those with high BMI and waist size tended to have higher artery inflammation levels, according to a *Miami Herald* [report](#) on the study.

In 3-year-old Hispanic girls and 5-year-old Hispanic boys, those with high BMI and waist size tended to have lower levels of HDL, the “good” cholesterol.

“Our findings show that the weight-associated cardiovascular disease risk isn’t going to happen way down the road when they age into adulthood,” said Dr. Sarah Messiah, research associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Miami’s Miller School of Medicine, in a statement. “The wheel has already been set in motion if a preschool-age child is obese.”



Findings suggest child health providers should consider using both BMI and waist circumference to identify young children who may be at risk for elevated cardiovascular disease biomarkers.

“Our study shows major implications for the health of the world’s future generations, in light of the global obesity epidemic which in turn will affect global economies and health care systems,” said Messiah, a well-known authority on obesity who was also lead author on a related study that drew national attention when it was published two years ago.



Research Briefs

USDA Launches MiPlato for Spanish-Speaking Consumers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has launched MiPlato.gov, the Spanish-language version of ChooseMyPlate.gov, which serves as a reminder to help Latino consumers make healthier food choices.

MiPlato will complement the MyPlate image as the government’s primary food group symbol, an easy-to-understand visual cue to help consumers adopt healthy eating habits consistent with the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Both images emphasize five food groups: fruits, vegetables, grains, proteins and dairy.

“USDA’s new MyPlate food icon is a simple reminder to help Americans think about their food choices in order to lead healthier lifestyles and today we are proud to introduce its Spanish-language partner, MiPlato, to help Hispanic consumers at mealtime,” said Agriculture



Secretary Tom Vilsack. “Regardless of our primary language, it is important that we all learn about and embrace healthy eating habits because a healthy nation starts with healthy people.”

Visit [MiPlato](#) or [MyPlate](#).

Policy & Built Environment Corner

Research Synthesis: Minorities Reside in Communities that Lack Physical Activity Options

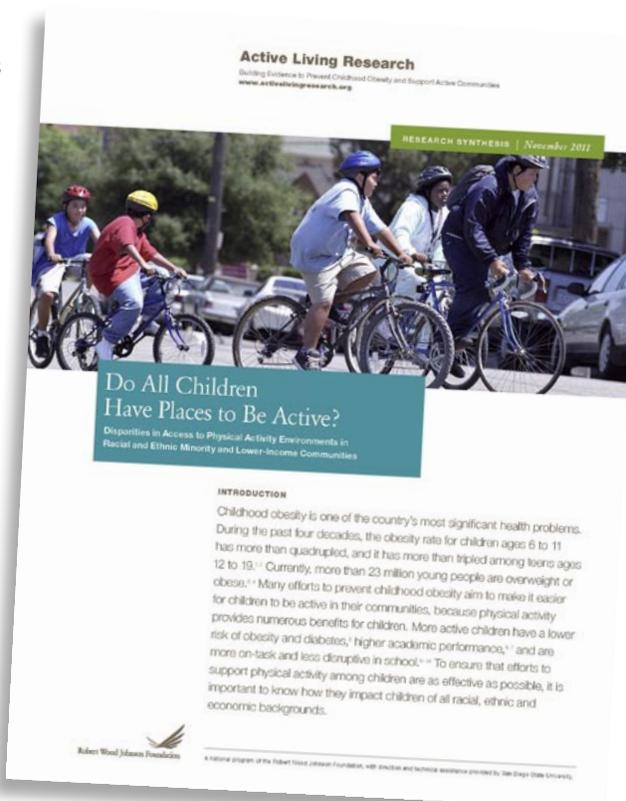
A new research [synthesis](#) by Active Living Research examines studies indicating that racial or ethnic minorities and lower-income people are more likely to live in communities that do not support physical activity than White or higher-income people.

Key research results suggest that racial/ethnic minorities and lower-income people:

- are more likely to live in neighborhoods with fewer and lower-quality sidewalks, and fewer aesthetic amenities like scenery that make walking safer, easier and more appealing;
- tend to live in neighborhoods with fewer parks and other recreation resources; and
- experience more danger from crime and traffic than others do, and face more barriers from neighborhood physical and social disorder.

The synthesis also highlights recommendations for ways in which policymakers can help support physical activity among people in lower-income communities and communities of color.

View the synthesis [here](#).



Policy Brief

Hispanic Spending, Population Growth Keeps Restaurant Industry Sales from Dipping

Without the influence of Hispanic spending and population patterns, restaurant industry sales would have declined during 2008 through 2010, according to *Latino Foodservice Trends in the U.S.*, a new report from Packaged

Facts, [SMR reports](#). Hispanics' share of consumer-driven restaurant sales has ticked upward from 12 percent in 2006 to 12.7 percent in 2011, although Hispanic share of limited-service sales decreased slightly. From 2005 to 2025, the U.S. Census has projected 78 percent growth in the Hispanic population, compared to 15 percent growth in the general population.

► Continued from page 1

Latino Obesity Epidemic

In addition to these three briefs, 20 pilot grantees funded by RWJF through *Salud America!* have produced briefs highlighting their own, new research. These briefs analyze a wide range of issues, from the impact of menu labeling in small restaurants in Los Angeles, to how after-school programs can help Latino youth be active, to how community gardens can help lower-income Latino families eat healthier.

"These briefs provide a snapshot of the state of the Latino childhood obesity epidemic and describe how leaders and policymakers can more effectively address it," said Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez, director of *Salud America!*

Latinos are currently the most populous U.S. ethnic minority. Nearly 40 percent of Latino children and teens are overweight and more than 20 percent are obese.

Video Roundup

Click on the images to see the associated video.



Child Obesity Prevention among Latino



Telenovela on Hispanic Obesity, Diabetes



Living with Type 2 Diabetes: A Teen's Journey



Latino Child Obesity: Did You Know?



Targeted Marketing to Minorities



Tackling Latino Health Issues



Challenges to Healthy Eating in Border Region

About the E-newsletter

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Salud America! is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The program aims to unite and increase the number of Latino scientists engaged in research on childhood obesity among Latinos to seek environmental and policy solutions to the epidemic. The network is directed by the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio. For more information, [click here](#). To learn more about the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's efforts to combat childhood obesity, [click here](#).

