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Study: Latino Youth Have Fastest-Rising Diabetes Rates

Latino youth have the fastest growing rates of types 1 and 2 diabetes, outpacing other ethnic groups even as diabetes among all U.S. youth is at an all-time high, *NBC Latino reports*.

American Diabetes Association-affiliated researchers found that the number of U.S. children and young adults under age 20 who are diagnosed with type 1 diabetes rose 23 percent over an eight-year period ending in 2009, and that the number diagnosed with type 2 diabetes rose 21 percent in the same span.

The proportions of Hispanic and non-Hispanic white youth with type 2 diabetes were initially low, but increased significantly over time.

Hispanic youth had a higher increase in diabetes rates than any other ethnic group.

“We didn’t see an increase among traditionally high-risk youth such as American Indians and African Americans, which indicates that those groups may have reached a plateau,” said study author Dr. Dana Dabelea in a statement to *NBC Latino*. “But now, rates of diabetes among Hispanic kids have outpaced other groups both in type 1 and type 2 diabetes—something we’ve never seen before and indicative of something we should take seriously.”

Researchers believe Hispanic children’s rising rates may be spurred by the onset of maternal diabetes and lifestyle choices, notably food choices and sedentary behaviors.

Watch New Videonovela on Diabetes Treatment

Aprende a vivir (Learn to Live) is a three-episode Spanish-language **videnovela** that provides information about diabetes management. The story reflects the reality of many Hispanics with diabetes who stop taking their medication due to unpleasant side effects or other reasons:



Director's Corner

Letter to members from Dr. Amelie Ramirez

Given the importance of helping children eat healthier food, I wanted to share with you a brief report on the nutritional values of kids' meals at America's top chain restaurants coauthored by our own *Salud America!* advisor, Dr. Mary Story.

The report, published in the journal *Childhood Obesity*, evaluated restaurants such as Arby's, Burger King, Chick-fil-A, Chili's, McDonald's, Sonic, Subway and more.

Of the 22 chains that had kids' menus and available nutrition information, researchers found that 99 percent of 1,662 children's meal combinations were of poor nutritional quality, based on key nutrition recommendations in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

At 15 of the chains, 100 percent of kids'



Amelie Ramirez

meal combinations failed to meet recommendations.

Kid's meals ranged from 200 to 1,580 calories, with the average meal containing 740 calories, about 300 more than the standard for a single meal.

Story of Health Eating Research and her colleagues concluded that restaurants should support healthier choices for children by reformulating existing menu items and adding healthier items, posting calories on menus, and setting nutrition standards for foods they

market to children.

Indeed, these suggested actions are a must, especially because children get about a third of their daily calories from foods eaten away from home.

Amelie G. Ramirez, Dr.P.H.

Director, *Salud America!*

Director, Institute for Health Promotion Research
UT Health Science Center at San Antonio



News Brief

Salud America! Advisors Win Awards

Salud America! advisors James Sallis and Mary Story were among the [winners](#) of the Centers for Disease Control's Pioneering Innovation Awards at the recent Weight of the Nation conference in Washington, D.C. Sallis and Story each accepted an Applied Obesity Research Award on behalf of Active Living Research and Healthy Eating Research, respectively. Tracy Orleans took home the same award on behalf of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF).



James Sallis



Mary Story

Salud America! Sponsors Nutrition/Physical Activity Conference

Salud America! and its headquarters, the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, sponsored the 2012 International Society for Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity Annual Meeting May 23-26, 2012, in Austin, Texas. The conference, attended by more than 500 leading experts and advocates, promoted insight into innovations in research, policy and practice on nutrition and physical activity. IHPR and *Salud America!* Director Dr. Amelie Ramirez chaired two sessions: "Environmental Determinants of Nutrition in Latinos" and "Combating Latino Childhood Obesity" (which also featured IHPR researcher Dr. Deborah Parra-Medina). Several *Salud America!* grantees presented research, including Dr. Carmen Nevarez of California and Drs. Nelda Mier and Meizi He of Texas. Other sessions featured *Salud America!* advisors Dr. Amy Yaroch, Dr. Elva Arredondo and Dr. James Sallis.

Funding

Grant Listings

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

[RWJF](#)

[NIH](#)

[NCCOR](#)

Stepping Up Against Latino Childhood Obesity

How an ‘Exercise Avoider’ Becomes an ‘Exercise Promoter’

Laura Esparza used to be an “exercise avoider.”

She steered clear of physical activities that resembled the P.E. classes of her youth, and had little confidence to work out or try playing any sports.

That changed when Esparza, a parent of three children and community volunteer in San Antonio, Texas, grew increasingly concerned with rising local obesity levels and learned that daily physical activity is an essential element of everyone’s physical and mental health.

Now she exercises regularly and is an avid “exercise promoter” at the IHPR at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, where she researches ways to increase Latino families’ physical activity.

“Spurred by my own experience, I became interested in promoting exercise and physical activity for those not already active,” said Esparza, who joined the IHPR in 2009 after earning her master’s degree in health and kinesiology at UT San Antonio, in an interview with *Salud America!* “I want to help solve the obesity health crisis.”

Esparza helped coordinate and design the IHPR’s multi-component health behavior-change intervention, called “Be Fit With Friends,” which uses text messaging and social media to promote physical activity among adolescent Latina Girl Scouts in San Antonio.

She also coordinates Y Living, a healthy lifestyle program that also educates on cancer risk reduction with community partner, the YMCA of Greater San Antonio.

“I enjoy working with community partners because they are so committed to improving the lives of their



From the San Antonio Express-News

Participants leave the starting line of the Girl Scouts’ “Be Fit With Friends” scavenger hunt in March 2011 at a park in San Antonio, Texas. Laura Esparza of the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio helps coordinate the “Be Fit With Friends” project

constituents in an increasingly challenging resource environment,” she said. “Community-academic collaboration is not easy work—it takes a lot of time and energy to build on the knowledge and strengths of both sides in order to develop programs that have a chance of success. In the end, everyone involved wants to improve the health and well-being of the community, and I am so pleased to be a part of that.”

Esparza takes her promoter role directly into the community, too.

She is vice-chair of the Active Living Council of San Antonio, a group focused on facilitating change in policy, infrastructure and attitudes to promote active living throughout the community, and serves on the community board of the Methodist Healthcare System, the city’s largest hospital system.

“Improving health takes a multi-level effort, from lending a hand in the community to figuring out how to get 12-year-old girls excited about trying a new exercise,” Esparza said. “The challenge is to make being physically active the easy choice.”



Laura Esparza

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](#).



Zan Gao

Study: Impact of Physical Activity on Fitness & Academic Performance

In his *Salud America!* pilot research project, Dr. Zan Gao of Texas Tech University examined the impact of a structured exercise program (using the interactive dance-based video game Dance Dance Revolution [DDR], aerobic dance and jumping rope) on physical

fitness and academic performance in urban Latino children.

Key preliminary findings include:

- children who participate in a structured exercise program at school are more likely to improve both their one-mile run performance and their math scores over time; and
- students believed the DDR intervention program benefited their fitness and academics.

These findings provide preliminary empirical support for using interactive dance-based exercise to improve children's fitness and academic performance.



Monika Stodolska

Study: Crime, Physical Activity and Outdoor Recreation among Latino Adolescents

In her *Salud America!* pilot research project, Dr. Monika Stodolska University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign examined the relationship between crime and physical activity among Latino youths ages 11-14 in three

environments: school yards and grounds; community parks; and neighborhood streets, sidewalks, alleys and yards in a Chicago neighborhood.

Key preliminary findings include:

- participating children witnessed many acts of violence in their neighborhoods;
- participants were greatly concerned about their safety, and fear of crime affects their participation in physical activities in different recreation environments;
- participants' parents were deeply concerned about their children's safety and restrict their leisure behavior; and
- children devised strategies to avoid crime and increase safety when participating in physical activities.

This study suggests that providing supervised indoor physical activities through schools or community organizations, and increasing police presence in outdoor recreation environments such as parks and school grounds, particularly in the evening hours, may help increase physical activity levels among Latino children.



Miriam Vega

Study: La Familia en la Cocina is Speaking Two Languages

In her *Salud America!* pilot research project, Dr. Miriam Vega of the Latino Commission on AIDS in New York interviewed Latina mothers and children to better understand their knowledge,

attitudes and communication behaviors related to food consumption and preferences, as well as the built and cultural environments in which they make decisions.

Key preliminary findings include:

- many immigrant Latinas felt powerless to address weight issues; and
- a large gap exists in the manner in which a mother and child communicated with researchers.

This study suggests that to improve the health of Latino families, programs could target family members separately to account for differing communication styles. Social marketing efforts relating to nutrition and obesity may fail to recognize the Latina mother as a separate audience from the child—in terms of language, cultural values, etc., on food choices.



Dharma Cortes

Study: Improving Food Purchasing Selection among Low-Income Latinos

In her *Salud America!* pilot research project, Dr. Dharma Cortes of the University of Massachusetts, Boston used an educational intervention to improve food purchasing behaviors

and thus increase healthy eating among low-income Spanish-speaking Latino families.

Key preliminary findings include:

- low-income Latino families spent one-third of their income on food;
- much of the food purchased by Latino families was calorie-dense, low in fiber and high in fat, sodium and carbohydrates;
- giving feedback to families about their food receipts' nutritional analyses provided an opportunity for researchers to recommend changes in purchasing patterns; and
- many families adopted instructions on buying budget-friendly, healthier alternative foods.

Results suggest the need to develop tailored social marketing messages and other communication strategies

Research

Activity Breaks: A Promising Strategy for Keeping Children Physically Active at School

Only one in four U.S. public elementary schools offered students physical activity breaks apart from physical education class and recess during the 2009–11 school years, according to a new report.

The [report](#), *Activity Breaks: A Promising Strategy for Keeping Children Physically Active at School* from RWJF's Bridging the Gap program, examined the prevalence of schools that provide these types of physical activity breaks, including breaks for stretching, yoga, and other movement during and between classroom activities.

It also considered the type and total duration of breaks, and explored whether the use of activity breaks varies by school characteristics or by provision of other opportunities for activity.

Although most schools do not offer activity breaks, evidence suggests that students and teachers may benefit from such breaks.

Students in schools that offered physical activity breaks spent an average of almost 40 minutes per week in such breaks. Previous studies have shown that offering students activity breaks during classes increases their levels of physical activity. Studies also show that allocating school time for physical activity does not adversely affect students' academic performance.

Scheduling brief activity breaks could be a promising strategy for promoting physical activity during the school



day without creating additional challenges for teachers, administrators and students.

Read more [here](#).



Research Briefs

Study: Liver Cancer in Latinos Linked to Diabetes, Obesity

Liver cancer rates among South Texas Latinos are higher than those for other U.S. Latinos, as are their rates of obesity and diabetes. The relationships between these ailments are being mapped by researchers at IHPR at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, the team behind *Salud America!* In a study in the journal [PLoS ONE](#), the researchers, led by IHPR and *Salud America!* Director Dr. Amelie Ramirez, looked at overall liver cancer rates among U.S. Latinos and compared this to a Texas sample and a South Texas subset from 1995-2006.

They found that from 1995 to 2006, annual age-adjusted liver cancer incidence increased among all populations—but was highest in South Texas Latinos over the entire period. The increase among South Texas Latinos was also significantly greater than all Texas Latinos, who in turn had significantly higher levels of liver cancer than the U.S. national sample. While obesity and diabetes increased among all three groups, obesity rates were higher in Texas Latinos and highest in South Texas Latinos.

The study warrants further exploration if there is a relationship between diabetes, obesity and liver cancer, so that researchers can look at the problem from the standpoint of prevention, said Dr. Ramirez.

Policy & Built Environment Corner

Get the Policy Tools to Improve Children's Health in Your Community

Several health organizations are spurring people to create healthy changes in their regions.

In celebration of the recent [Food Revolution Day 2012](#) led by the Jamie Oliver Foundation, ChangeLab Solutions organized a set of policy tools people need to promote healthier eating in their communities.

Tools include:

- model policies for healthier vending machines at school;
- toolkits for community kitchens, play space, and more;
- toolkits for fresher foods in schools, such as school gardening programs and farm-to-school programs;
- model policies for restricting food and beverage advertising in schools;
- information about federal legislation on new nutrition standards;
- model policies for providing free drinking water in schools; and
- a primer on the farm bill.

Tools can be found [here](#).

The Society for Behavioral Medicine (SBM) also offers a variety of tools for advocates. Their recent [paper](#) outlines action steps that SBM and its members can take to impact health-related public policy, and SBM also offers a variety of policy [statements](#) on topics such as childhood obesity and school-based physical activity.

The Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity offers a [website](#) to teach parents how to advocate for healthier school foods.

Tools for Childhood Obesity Researchers

New online research-assistance tools from NCCOR are the subject of two introductory videos and a scientific article.

One video highlights the Catalogue of Surveillance Systems, a one-stop place for users to review, sort and compare more than 85 publicly available data resources relevant to childhood obesity research.

The other explains the Measures Registry, a portfolio of more than 800 measures related to diet and physical activity. This tool helps users find and select tools (like questionnaires or instruments) and methodologies (like protocols or analytic techniques) for researchers) for obesity-related research.

The [article](#) in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* describes the functions of NCCOR's registry and catalogue. The authors note some of the gaps that the catalogue has identified, such as the lack of policy surveillance systems, and describes the registry's impact in identifying gaps in measures available in Spanish, as well as those for rural populations or environments.

NCCOR brings together four of the nation's leading research funders—the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (CDC), the NIH, the RWJF and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)—to accelerate progress to reduce the problem of childhood obesity in America.

Learn about the Registry



Learn about the Catalogue



Video Roundup

Click on the images to see the associated video.



How Does the 'CATCH' Program Prevent Obesity?



Latino Child Obesity: Did You Know?



Culturally Tailored Program Helps Mexican-Americans Lose Weight



What Makes a Farmers' Market Viable in a Low-Income Area?



Latina's Diabetes Experience: 'I Choose Life'



Dramatic, Poetry-Infused PSAs Target Minority Diabetes

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](#).

Recess Coaches Help Show Kids How 'Playworks'

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

Playworks is a national nonprofit that provides coaches to lead healthy recess and other playtime to get kids active in diverse **schools** in 23 cities—and also is showing promising success at combating bullying.

During a recent **evaluation** of the program, researchers found that investments in school recess and organized play prevented bullying, improved how students act during recess and how ready they were for class, and provided more time for teaching and learning.

"Our research shows that Playworks makes a difference. Teachers in Playworks schools reported less bullying and exclusionary behavior during recess relative to control school teachers," said Dr. Susanne James-Burdumy, associate director of research at Mathematica, in an interview for the *SaludToday* blog, which is directed by the leaders of *Salud America!* "Playworks also facilitated students' transitions back to classroom learning."

Researchers concluded that Playworks improved the school climate through:

- Better Recess Behavior and Readiness for Class: Teachers at Playworks



schools tended to report better student behavior at recess and readiness for class than teachers at control schools, and they were more likely to report that their students enjoyed adult-organized recess activities.

- More Time for Teaching and Learning: Teachers in Playworks schools reported having fewer difficulties and spending significantly less time transitioning to learning activities after recess than teachers in control schools. Playworks students were also more likely than control students to report better behavior and attention in class after sports, games and play.
- Safer Schools: Teachers in Playworks schools perceived that students felt safer and more included at recess, compared to teachers in control schools.
- Satisfied Teachers: Nearly 100 percent of teachers in Playworks schools reported that they wanted the program in their school again the following year.