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Statistics illustrate worsening problem

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An increasing number of American young people are carrying too much weight, and their perceptions about weight are changing. Here are some statistics:

The prevalence of extra weight among children ages 6 to 11 has more than doubled in the past 20 years - rising from 7 percent in 1980 to nearly 19 percent in 2004.

Worse, in that period the prevalence of extra weight among adolescents ages 12 to 19 more than tripled - from 5 percent to 17 percent.

In the 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 13 percent of all high school students were overweight, an increase from 1999.

But body-image issues have also shifted. While 10 percent of girls and 16 percent of boys were overweight, far more see themselves as too heavy. More than one out of three girls and one out of four boys describe themselves as overweight.

The urge to diet has grown. More than 62 percent of girls and 30 percent of boys are trying to lose weight.

Source: Compiled by Cinda Williams Chima, University of Akron

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