# Salud America Fights Latino Childhood Obesity

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Obesity is an epidemic in the United States, and it's particularly bad among Latino youth. Salud America, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) Research Network to Prevent Obesity among Latino Children—a network of researchers aimed at combating obesity among Latino children—has publicized the results of a number of research projects investigating the causes of Latino childhood obesity and ways to fight it, Statesman.com reports.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 40 percent of Mexican-American children ages 2 to 19 are obese or overweight. Compared with other kids in the United States, Latino children eat less healthy diets, participate less in organized sports and watch more TV. It's estimated that half of all Latino kids born today will end up with diabetes.

Three major Salud America research briefs published in January are aimed at helping politicians and advocates set better policy and funding goals to reduce Latino childhood obesity. These briefs cover subjects such as exercise opportunities, availability and cost of healthy food, and the impact of food marketing on kids' diets.

Research briefs from 20 Salud America pilot grantees illuminated both further problems and potential solutions to Latino childhood obesity issues. For instance, among Latinos on the border between Texas and Mexico, 32 percent of children believed they were overweight, but only 15 percent of parents thought their children were overweight—suggesting that a significant number of Latino parents simply don't recognize a potential health problem in their kids. Another study indicated that people in low-income Latino communities eat healthier if nutritional information is labeled on local restaurant menus. A third project showed that Latino kids were more likely to be physically fit when their schools complied with the school district's physical education requirements.

While politicians and community groups can do a lot to improve matters-such as improving school exercise and dining policies, or changing the rules on food subsidies and marketing-dealing with these issues begins at home, with parents working to ensure their kids eat right and get enough exercise.

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