

Obesity rates decreasing for the first time in decades

By ACSH Staff — December 11, 2012

It may be hard to swallow after over two decades of increasing obesity rates, but for the first time, some American cities are beginning to see [declines in](#) ^[1] these numbers. Although the declines are small, they are significant in showing that some of the policies and measures taken to address this unsolvable epidemic may actually be working. And this is extremely important considering that about 17 percent of children under 20 are obese.

But researchers are not certain to what measures the improvements should be attributed. The decline may be a reflection of a national shift, or it could be merely that the results have been tabulated best in those cities where height and weight are routinely measured. Or it could be due to fewer obese children entering the school system. What is known, however, is that these declines are predominantly seen in those cities that have had obesity reduction policies in place for many years.

In Philadelphia, for instance, sugary drinks were taken out of school vending machines in 2004, calorie and fat limits were set on snacks in 2005 and deep fryers were removed from the cafeteria in 2009. Some schools in Philadelphia even begin the day with a nutrition tip over the loudspeaker.

But the answer may lie in broader policy actions and really, it's too early to see if this trend is going to stick. I'd like to see another year of measurement before I go out and party over this, said Mary Currier, Mississippi's state health officer.

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[1] http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/11/health/childhood-obesity-drops-in-new-york-and-philadelphia.html?pagewanted=2&_r=0&hp