



## HEALTHY WEIGHTS AND LIFESTYLE

The New Brunswick Student Wellness Survey (NBSWS) is a provincial initiative of the Department of Wellness, Culture and Sport (WCS). Data collection and analysis is conducted by the Health and Education Research Group (University of New Brunswick and Université de Moncton) in collaboration with WCS, and in cooperation with the Department of Education. The purpose of the survey is to examine the health and wellness attitudes and behaviours of students in grades 6-12.

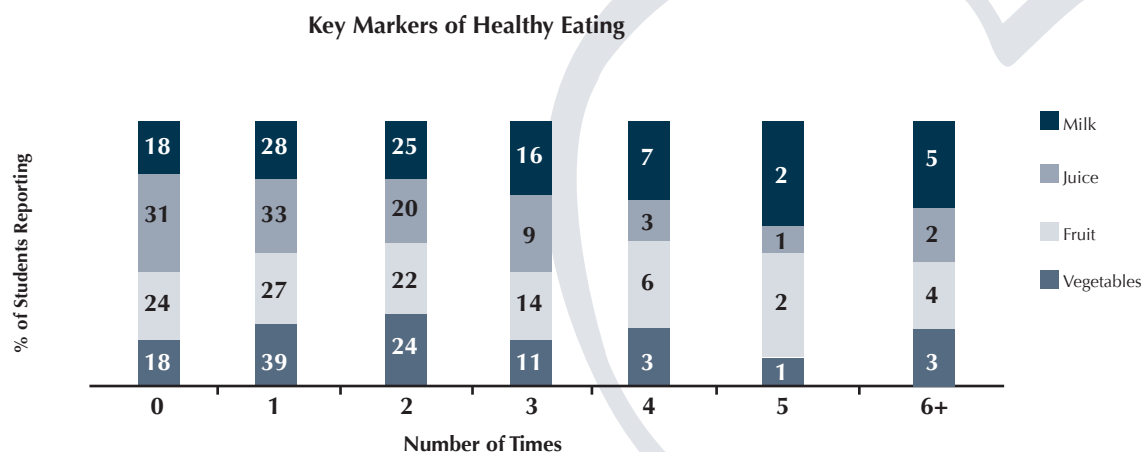
Being overweight due to poor nutrition and lack of physical activity is one of the greatest health challenges and risk factors for chronic disease in the 21st century (World Health Organization, 2003).

In the past 25 years, there has been a dramatic increase in the percentage of Canadian adolescents who are considered to be overweight or obese. Overweight and obesity rates in adolescence often persist into adulthood. Fast food consumption and food portion sizes have increased significantly in the past 20 years (Shields, 2005).

### Food and Beverage Consumption

Children and adolescents who eat fruit and vegetables five or more times a day are substantially less likely to be overweight or obese than those whose fruit and vegetable consumption is less frequent (Shields, 2005).

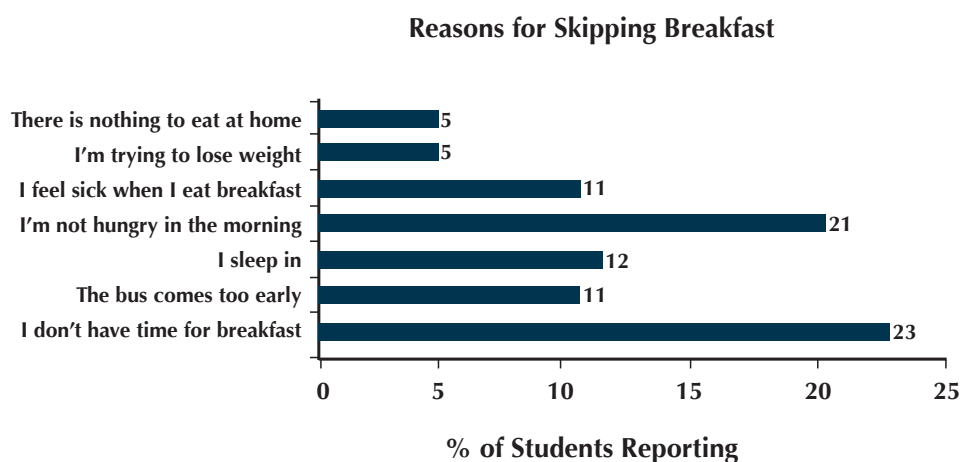
- 73% of students reported eating candy, chocolate, or sweets on the day preceding the survey.
- 62% reported drinking sweetened non-nutritious beverages (e.g. pop, flavoured drinks) at least once on the day prior to the survey.
- 21% of students reported drinking sweetened non-nutritious beverages 3 times or more on the day before the survey.
- 29% of students consumed milk at least three times on the day before the survey.
- 24% of students reported eating fruit and vegetables (for a combined total) five or more times on the day before the survey.
- 42% of students reported eating fruit, eating vegetables and drinking 100% fruit juice (for a combined total) five or more times on the day prior to the survey.



## Eating Breakfast

Students who eat breakfast have improved memory, problem-solving skills and creative abilities (Health Canada, 2007a). Researchers affirm that breakfast is essential to creating readiness for children to learn each day (Rampersaud, Pereira, Girard, Adams & Metz, 2005).

- 41% of students reported eating breakfast every day.
- 22% of students reported eating breakfast on the day before the survey.
- 39% of students reported eating breakfast fewer than 5 times in the week before the survey.



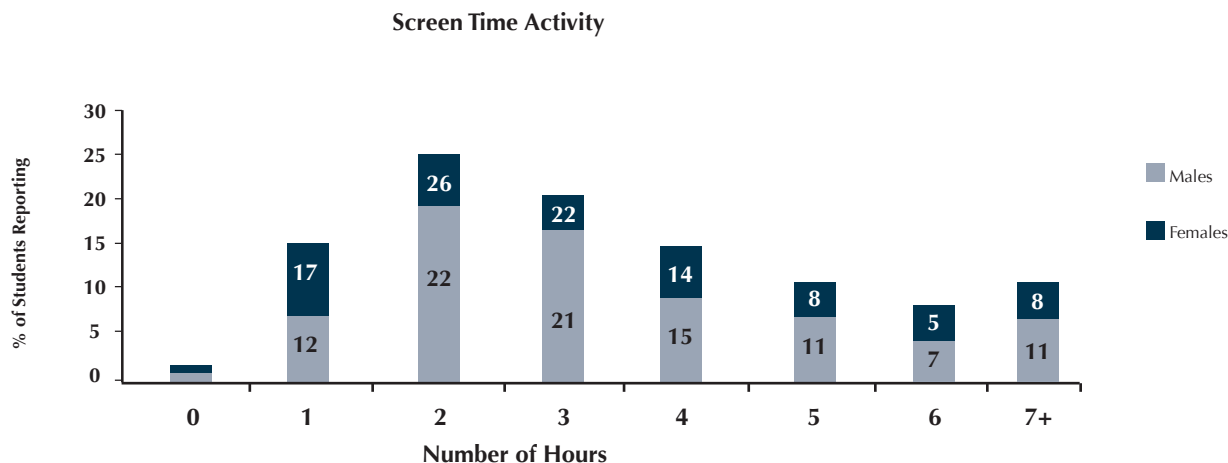
## Physical Activity

Physical activities provide opportunities for students to be active and to form relationships that reinforce healthy lifestyle attitudes and behaviours. Canadian students spend 40% less time being physically active than students did 15 years ago (Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, 2005). Physical activity can help students achieve and maintain a healthy body weight, reduce stress, increase energy levels, and improve their overall outlook on life (Health Canada, 2007b).

- 37% of students reported taking part in school-organized non-competitive activities (e.g. intramurals).
- 39% of students indicated participating in competitive sports (e.g. junior and varsity).
- 2% of students reported no physical activity in the week before the survey.
- Of those who reported doing hard or moderate physical activity, 60% were below the 90 minute per day minimum as recommended by *Canada's Physical Activity Guide* (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2002). This amount is roughly equivalent to 16,500 steps daily.
- In January 2011, *new* Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines were released by the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology. It is now recommended that children and youth, ages 5 to 17, be physically active (moderate to vigorous intensity) at least 60 minutes per day to achieve measurable health benefits (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2011). In NB, 57% of students reported meeting this guideline.

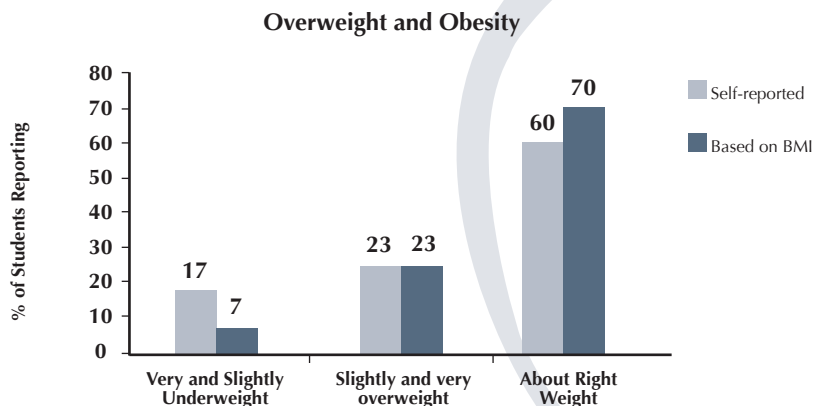
## Screen Time

The increase in “screen-time” among children and youth is contributing to the overweight and obesity epidemic (Health Canada, 2007b). Students should be encouraged during after-school hours to reduce sedentary routines (e.g. screen time), and to engage in more physically active past-times or leisure activities.



## Overweight and Obesity

Healthy body weight can be determined using the Body Mass Index (BMI), which is a measure of a person’s weight in comparison to their height. International definitions for overweight and obesity based on the distribution of BMI for males and females at each age have been established (Cole, Bellizzi, Flegal & Dietz, 2000). New Brunswick students in grades 6-12 were asked to provide their height and weight, and to describe their weight, resulting in the following:



## Comparison of NB Student Wellness Survey Results

The following provides a comparison of 2006-2007 and 2009-2010 outcomes of selected New Brunswick Wellness Strategy Indicators and Targets related to healthy weights and lifestyle.

Target	Wellness Indicator	2006-2007 Baseline	2009-2010 Results	Progress
↑	Youth who eat vegetables and fruit at least 5 times each day	26%	24%	👎
↓	Youth who regularly consume sweetened non-nutritional beverages	65%	62%	👍
↑	Youth who eat breakfast daily	37%	41%	👍
↑	Youth who spend at least 90 minutes each day in a combination of moderate and hard physical activity	31%	40%	👍
↑	Youth who spend 2 hours or less per day in sedentary activities such as watching TV and using computers	47%	40%	👎

### References

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The New Brunswick Student Wellness Survey Provincial Fact Sheets are available at [www.unbf.ca/education/herg](http://www.unbf.ca/education/herg) and [www.gnb.ca/wellness](http://www.gnb.ca/wellness)

- 127 schools participated in the 2009-2010 New Brunswick Student Wellness Survey.
- The survey data was collected from 21,078 across New Brunswick.
- The students surveyed were in grades 6 to 12.