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**Student Advisers**  
9- to 13-year olds  
throughout the  
United States

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## NEW SURVEY REVEALS KIDS WORRIED ABOUT OBESITY, TOO

*Survey finds that 59% of 9- to 13-year-olds polled have tried to lose weight.*

Milwaukee, WI, and Wilmington, DE, January 13, 2004 – The intense media attention and warnings from the medical community about the alarming rate of childhood obesity in the United States appear to be reaching children. The first of a series of KidsHealth® KidsPolls surveyed over 1,100 children from 9 to 13 years old about weight-related issues. Fifty-two percent (52%) of kids surveyed believe there is a problem with kids being overweight today. Fifty-nine percent (59%) said they've tried to lose weight.

Even of respondents who classified themselves as being “about the right weight” (55% of the kids), about half say they worry or stress about their weight and 57% admitted to having tried to lose weight. Surprisingly, 43% of those who classify themselves as “slightly” or “very underweight” have tried to lose weight. Girls worry or stress more about weight than boys (67% of girls admit to some level of worry versus 41% of boys), have been talked to more about their weight (64% of girls versus 47% of boys), and have tried to lose weight more (65% of girls versus 52% of boys).

Further, children appear to make the connection between weight and nutrition and exercise. When asked what is the most important cause of kids being overweight, 29% said it was kids not getting enough exercise, 25% said kids not eating right, and 19% blamed fast-food restaurants “serving the wrong foods.” A hopeful statistic found that 69% of kids said that “eating healthy and exercising” was the best way to control body weight, well ahead of the second place answer, “going on a diet” (17% of respondents). When asked for the best way to learn how to keep a healthy weight, 34% of kids said “from a doctor or nurse,” followed by 27% who said “joining a group, club, or team that teaches me about physical activity.”

The KidsHealth KidsPoll also revealed that kids are aware of the social and emotional ramifications of being overweight. Sixty percent (60%) of kids surveyed said it was harder for overweight kids to make friends. Fifty-four percent (54%) of kids say they stress or worry about their weight – 14% say they worry every day. However, when asked who talks to them individually about their weight, 44% of kids surveyed said “no one ever talks to me about my weight.”

Over 1,100 children ages 9 to 13 participated in the KidsHealth KidsPoll on weight-related issues at nine member sites of the National Association of Health Education Centers throughout the United States. The study was conducted by researchers from the Department of Health Education and Recreation, Southern Illinois University Carbondale. When survey participants were asked to describe their weight, 55% said they were “about the right weight,” 22% said they were “slightly or very overweight,” and 23% said they were “slightly or very underweight.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the percentage of overweight children in the United States tripled since 1980. Thirty percent (30%) of children are now classified as being either overweight or at risk for becoming overweight.

For complete survey findings and methodology, visit [nahec.org/KidsPoll/](http://nahec.org/KidsPoll/)  
For more information on findings or to arrange an interview concerning the KidsHealth KidsPoll, contact Madeleine Boyer (302) 651-6786 or [KidsPoll@KidsHealth.org](mailto:KidsPoll@KidsHealth.org).

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### **About the KidsHealth® KidsPoll**

A project of the National Association of Health Education Centers (NAHEC), the Nemours Center for Children’s Health Media (creators of KidsHealth.org), and Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Department of Health Education and Recreation (project researchers), the KidsHealth KidsPoll gives children a national platform to share their views on health-related issues that affect them. Throughout the school year, regular KidsHealth KidsPolls will reveal kids’ opinions on issues such as bullying, stress, and peer pressure.

For more information about the KidsHealth KidsPoll, please visit [nahec.org/KidsPoll/](http://nahec.org/KidsPoll/).

### **About the National Association of Health Education Centers (NAHEC)**

NAHEC is the national association and network of nonprofit health education centers (HECs) and of other organizations that support children’s health education and provide products and services to HECs. NAHEC member centers reached over 3 million children, teachers, and parents in 2003. HECs use life-size exhibits, advanced audio-visual technology, and specialized, interactive instructional techniques not generally found in conventional classrooms. The curriculum is designed to support school-mandated areas of study. With programs like “Blood & Guts,” Hummers outfitted with removable organs, and playgrounds modeled after anatomy parts, you’ll see why former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. C. Everett Koop proclaimed that health education centers “put pizzazz in prevention.” For more information about NAHEC, please visit [nahec.org](http://nahec.org).

**About KidsHealth and the Nemours Center for Children's Health Media**

The Nemours Center for Children's Health Media is a unique physician-led editorial group that specializes in developing age-appropriate online, print, and video educational media for parents, kids, and teens. It creates KidsHealth.org, the most visited website devoted to children's health. In addition to medical information, KidsHealth features articles on emotional, behavioral, and developmental issues of interest to all three audiences. KidsHealth was chosen as the sole U.S. nominee in the e-health category of the 2003 World Summit Award™, which is part of the United Nations' World Summit on the Information Society. Recently, it won the Pirelli Award for *Best Educational Multimedia*. The Nemours Center for Children's Health Media offers the nation's only fellowships in children's health media—providing physicians with the opportunity to learn how to improve family health through effective communications. It is a division of The Nemours Foundation, one of the largest nonprofit organizations devoted to children's health. For more information about KidsHealth, please visit [KidsHealth.org](http://KidsHealth.org).

**About Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Department of Health Education & Recreation**

Researchers from Southern Illinois University Carbondale's Department of Health Education and Recreation conduct the KidsHealth KidsPoll. The research team for this project is led by Steve Brown and David Birch, faculty members in the Department of Health Education and Recreation. The department offers a bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree in health education and a bachelor's and master's degree in recreation. The health education program is recognized nationally as a leader in school health education and graduate-level teaching and research. Graduates of the program are in health education leadership positions across the country. The department includes 11 health education faculty members and six recreation faculty members. For more information about SIUC, please visit [www.siu.edu](http://www.siu.edu).