

Childhood Overweight in Metcalfe County, KY

Metcalfe County Public School Students

A report from the Barren River District Health Department, August 2010

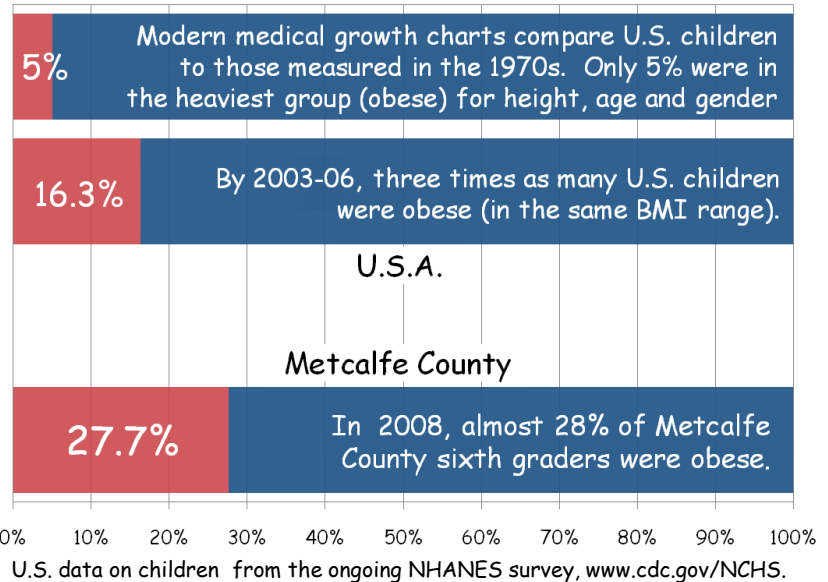
Since 2001, the Barren River District Health Department has worked with local schools to collect and analyze height and weight data from required 6th grade and school entry physicals. Here are results from the 2007-08 school year.

Overweight children have more health and social problems. A greater concern is obesity-related health problems in adulthood, including diabetes, heart attack, stroke, respiratory problems, and many more. To help ensure this generation a long and productive life, we must address childhood overweight today.

In the bar chart at right, red bars represent the children who were Obese on the day of their 6th grade physical. From their recorded height and weight, we calculated a Body Mass Index (BMI) and plotted them on the same growth charts used by pediatricians. Only a child's physician can diagnose overweight, based on multiple factors, but the BMI and growth chart percentiles are an accepted public health indicator for looking at a population. Children between 85th and 95th percentile for age and gender are considered Overweight, and those at or above the 95th percentile are considered Obese. In Metcalfe County, 27.7% of 6th graders were Obese. Another 18% were Overweight at the time of their 6th grade physicals.

In the bottom chart, we compare 2007-08 Metcalfe kindergarteners to 6th grade students. Is the rate of child obesity getting worse between school entry and 6th grade?

How do Metcalfe County kids measure up?



Are Schools to Blame?

Certainly not. But we like the approach of Dr. Gene Wilhoit, former KY Education Commissioner, "Schools did not cause childhood obesity, but we should not be part of the problem, and we can certainly be part of the solution." Many schools have implemented policy changes to reduce availability of high calorie foods and to encourage more physical activity.

