

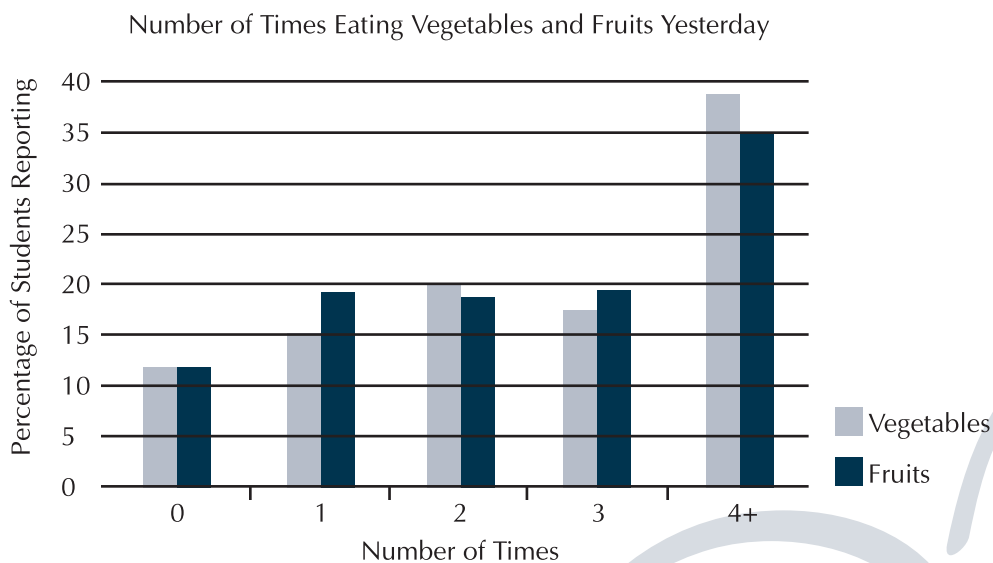


## HEALTHY WEIGHTS AND LIFESTYLES

In the past 25 years there has been a dramatic increase in the percentage of Canadian children who are considered to be overweight or obese. The prevalence of obese children and youth has increased by 35.7% from 2003 to 2006 (Canada's Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth, 2007).

- Overweight and obesity rates in children often carry over into adulthood (Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, 2006).
- Both fast food consumption and food portion sizes have increased significantly in the past 20 years (Measured Obesity - Overweight Canadian Children and Adolescents, 2005).
- Children spend 40% less time being physically active than they did 15 years ago (Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, 2005).

### Eating Vegetables and Fruits



Children and adolescents who eat 5 or more vegetables and/or fruits a day are substantially less likely to be overweight or obese than those whose vegetable and fruit consumption is less frequent (Shields, 2004).

- 45% of Grade 4 and 5 students reported eating vegetables two times or less and 48% ate fruit two times or less, the day before the survey.
- 53% of the parents of Kindergarten to Grade 5 students reported that their child consumes vegetables and/or fruits three times or fewer each day.
- 59% of parents of Kindergarten to Grade 5 students reported that they believe that eating 5 or more vegetables and/or fruits is required on a daily basis for their child's well-being and health; however, only 23% of parents reported that their child was meeting this standard.

## Eating Breakfast

Breakfast has long been regarded as the most important meal of the day. Researchers affirm that breakfast is essential to creating readiness for children to learn each day (Bachman, 2002; Rampersaud et al., 2005).

- 94% of students in Grade 4 and 5 reported eating breakfast the day before the survey.
- 88% of parents of Kindergarten to Grade 5 students reported eating breakfast on the day before the survey.
- 98% of parents of Kindergarten to Grade 5 students reported that they believe that eating a healthy breakfast helps children do better at school. In contrast, 28% of students in Grades 4 and 5 reported that they were unsure or did not think that eating a healthy breakfast would affect their performance in school.

## Consuming Non-nutritious Foods

Children, in particular, are consuming significantly more added sugars in the form of soft drinks and other sweetened beverages, candy and chocolate bars. This increase has coincided with the rise in childhood obesity over the past 30 years (Guthrie & Morton, 2000). Although positive efforts have been undertaken to limit the availability of non-nutritious food (Policy 711, 2005), a high percentage of New Brunswick children are still consuming these foods.

- 80% of students in Grades 4 and 5 reported eating candy, chocolate, or sweets at least one time or more during the day before the survey.
- 65% of students in Grades 4 and 5 reported drinking sweetened non-nutritious beverages (e.g. pop) at least once the day before the survey.

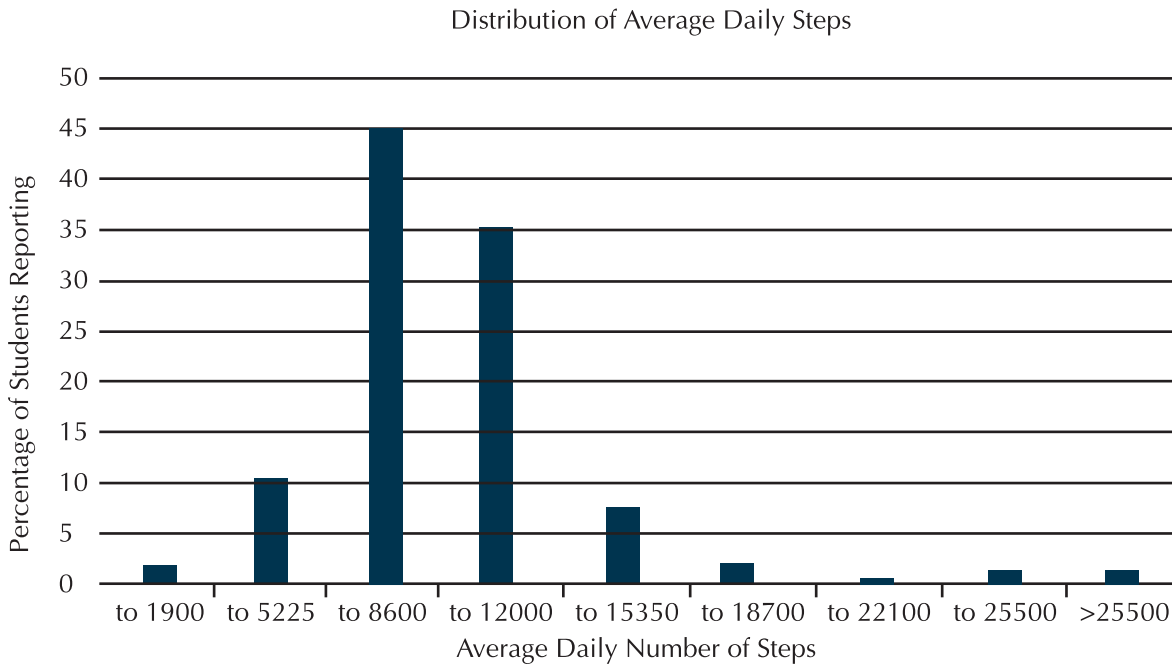
## Participating in Physical Activity

Regardless of age, there is conclusive evidence that physical activity contributes to a healthy lifestyle and prevention of chronic disease. In fact, regular participation in physical activity during the early years has been cited as the factor that will have the greatest impact on an individual's lifespan and quality of life (Canada's Report Card on Physical Activity for Children & Youth, 2008). It is recommended that children should be physically active for a minimum of 90 minutes daily for optimal growth and development (Canadian Physical Activity Guide for Children, 2002). This amount is equal to approximately 16,500 steps.

- 25% of parents of Kindergarten to Grade 5 students reported that they think 90 minutes or more of daily physical activity is required to foster a child's positive well-being and health.
- 50% of parents of Kindergarten to Grade 5 students reported that their child gets 90 minutes or more of daily physical activity.

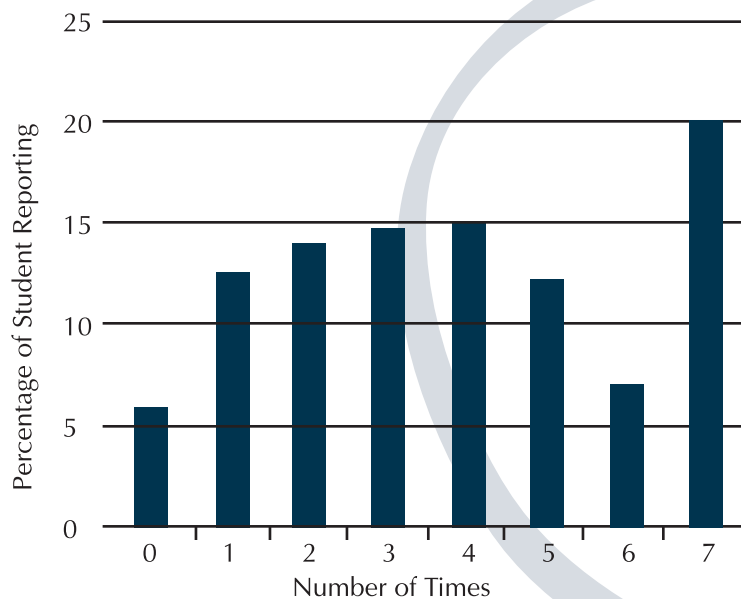
- 97% of Grade 5 students did not achieve the recommended daily number of steps (16,500) based on their participation in a 7 day accelerometer program\*, monitoring their waking hours. The participating students recorded on average only 8,623 daily steps.

\* It should be noted that accelerometers monitor daily steps; however they do not track all physical activities such as bicycling, swimming, and skiing.



- 94% of Grade 4 and 5 students reported being very physically active for 30 minutes or more at least once in the previous week; however, only 20% reported being this active 7 or more times.

Number of Times Being Very Physically Active in the Previous Week



## Screen Time

*Canada's Physical Activity Guidelines* recommend that children and youth should spend less than 2 hours per day in sedentary activities (e.g. watching TV, computer time).

- Approximately 57% of Grade 4 and 5 students reported that on most days they spend 2 hours or more of screen time activity related to playing video games, using the computer (not for school), or watching TV or movies.
- Approximately 31% of parents reported that on most days they spend 2 hours or more of screen time activity related to playing video games, using the computer (not for work), or watching TV or movies.

## Assessing Direct Physical Measures

Body Mass Index and waist-to-height ratios are used to assess healthy weights of children and adults. According to these methods, approximately 24% to 31% of students in Grades 1, 3 and 5 in the recent elementary wellness data collection were either overweight or obese.

- Using Body Mass Index, direct measures of students in Grades 1, 3 and 5 revealed that:
  - 2% of students were underweight,
  - 67% were within the recommended healthy weight category for their age and gender,
  - 14% were overweight, and
  - 17% were obese.
- Applying waist to height ratio measures with the same sample suggested that 24% of students were identified as either overweight or obese.

*The New Brunswick Provincial Student Wellness Fact Sheets are available at [www.unbf.ca/education/herg](http://www.unbf.ca/education/herg). Twenty-three elementary schools, (a representative NB sample) participated in the 2007-2008 New Brunswick Elementary Student Wellness Survey which included:*

- *Student wellness survey (Grades 4 and 5)*
- *Direct physical measures (Grades 1, 3 and 5)*
- *Physical activity monitoring (Grade 5)*
- *Home wellness survey (Parents of Kindergarten to Grade 5 students)*