



Yale SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH



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## **New Study Shows School Breakfasts Support Healthy Weight**

**Hartford, Conn.** – Middle school students who eat breakfast at school - even if they have already had breakfast at home - are less likely to be overweight or obese than students who skip breakfast, according to a new study by the Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity at the University of Connecticut and the Community Alliance for Research and Engagement (CARE) at Yale School of Public Health.

“When it comes to the relationship between school breakfast and body weight, our study suggests that two breakfasts are better than none,” said Marlene Schwartz, a study author and Director of the Rudd Center.

The findings of the study, published today in [Pediatric Obesity](#), add to an ongoing debate over policy efforts to increase daily school breakfast consumption. Previous research has shown that, for students, eating breakfast is associated with improved academic performance, better health, and healthy body weight. But there have been concerns that a second breakfast at school following breakfast at home could increase the risk of unhealthy weight gain.

“Our study does not support those concerns,” said Jeannette Ickovics, Director of CARE. “Providing a healthy breakfast to students at school helps alleviate food insecurity and is associated with students maintaining a healthy weight.”

The study involved 584 middle school students from 12 schools selected randomly from 27 schools in an urban school district where breakfast and lunch are provided to all students at no cost. Researchers tracked the students’ breakfast-eating locations and patterns, and their weight over a two-year period from fifth grade in 2011-2012 to seventh grade in 2013-2014.

Specifically, the study found that:

- Students who skipped or ate breakfast inconsistently were more than twice as likely to be overweight or obese compared with students who ate double breakfasts.
- Student weight change from 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade for the double breakfast eaters was not different than the weight changes measured for all of the other students.

The study holds implications for advocates and policy makers working to reverse the nation's childhood obesity problem. Approximately one-third of American children ages 6 to 11 are overweight or obese, with higher rates among black and Hispanic children than among white children. School breakfast promotion initiatives have begun, but evidence is needed to ensure these efforts do not lead to the consumption of excess calories among children at risk for obesity.

Study co-authors include Margaret Read of the UConn Rudd Center; Kathryn Henderson of Henderson Consulting, and Jeannette Ickovics, Fatma Shebl, and Sisi Wang of the Yale School of Public Health.

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#### **About the UConn Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity**

The Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity at the University of Connecticut is a distinguished multi-disciplinary policy research center dedicated to promoting solutions to childhood obesity, poor diet, and weight bias through research and policy. The Rudd Center is a leader in building broad-based consensus to change diet and activity patterns by conducting research and educating policy makers and the public. For more information, visit [www.uconnruddcenter.org](http://www.uconnruddcenter.org) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/uconnruddcenter](https://www.twitter.com/uconnruddcenter) or on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/uconnruddcenter](https://www.facebook.com/uconnruddcenter).