

**Media Inquiries:**

Don Bolger  
Public Information Officer  
☎ (630) 221-7374

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Established in 1945, DuPage County Health Department promotes physical and emotional health; prevents illness injury and disability; protects health from environmental risk factors, and strives to assure the provision of accessible, quality service.

April 2, 2018

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Health Department Releases Latest Data on Childhood Obesity in DuPage County**

**DUPAGE COUNTY**—The DuPage County Health Department has released the latest obesity data for DuPage County in a publication titled “Childhood Obesity in DuPage County (December 2017).”

What the data say:

- After a decline in recent years, the obesity rate holds steady among school-aged youth. In 2016-2017, more than one-in-seven (14.8 percent) kindergarten, sixth grade, and ninth grade public school students in DuPage County had obesity.
- Additionally, in 2016-2017, 44 percent of students with obesity had an elevated blood pressure (BP) reading.
- The obesity rate among children aged 2 to 4 years enrolled in DuPage County’s Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program (15.1 percent in 2016) continues to exceed the national WIC rate (14.5 percent in 2014), stressing the need for early intervention.

Why is this important? Reducing the rates of obesity is critical to improving the health of DuPage County. Obesity during childhood and adolescence may lead to health problems such as high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, fatty liver disease, joint problems, and asthma. In addition, obesity in children and adolescents may be associated with lower academic achievement, depression, behavioral problems, low self-esteem, and lower quality of life.

Children who have obesity are more likely to become adults with obesity. Changes made now will not only affect today's children but will have a positive, compounding effect as those children enter adulthood and have their own families.

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What can parents do?

- Engage in your child's School Wellness Committee.
- Plan meals for the week.
- Serve lots of fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain foods.
- Eat meals together as a family.
- Serve reasonably-sized portions.
- Drink lots of water and cut down on drinks with sugar.
- Be physically active daily as a family.
- Cut down on screen time.

The full publication on obesity in DuPage County is available at [www.dupagehealth.org/dupagebmi](http://www.dupagehealth.org/dupagebmi), and for additional health indicators in DuPage County, visit [www.impactdupage.org](http://www.impactdupage.org). Everyone can take action to impact their health and help reduce these rates by increasing opportunities for physical activity and healthy eating. Visit [www.forwarddupage.org](http://www.forwarddupage.org) for recommendations for child care settings, healthcare facilities, municipalities, parents, schools, and worksites.

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