

Mission:  
To protect, promote & improve the health  
of all people in Florida through integrated  
state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott  
Governor

John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS  
State Surgeon General & Secretary

Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

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## **Florida Preschoolers Make Gains Toward Healthier Weights**

**TALLAHASSEE**—The Florida Department of Health and Healthiest Weight Florida join the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the Florida Department of Education in celebrating a 7.1 percent decline in obesity rates among preschool children from disadvantaged families.

“For our low-income families it is often more difficult to practice healthy habits. These results affirm that we are on the right track,” said State Surgeon General and Secretary of Health Dr. John Armstrong. “The joint efforts of the Department of Health, the Department of Education and the Department of Agriculture have created supportive environments that enable families, children and community members to make healthier choices each day.”

A recent report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows widespread progress among preschool children achieving healthier weights who are enrolled in federal health and nutrition programs. Only 17 other states experienced such significant improvements.

The authors of the CDC report cite several factors that likely contributed to the progress in achieving healthier weights including:

- Updates to the food package for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children that emphasized healthy foods and beverages, such as whole grains, fruits, vegetables and low-fat milk;
- New nutrition and physical activity standards for early child-care programs; and
- Increased support for breastfeeding mothers.

“Florida is moving in the right direction to ensure our children have access to wholesome foods, get plenty of physical activity and learn about the importance of nutrition and exercise in their lives,” said Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Adam H. Putnam. “The school breakfast, lunch and summer feeding programs that we administer provide a good start to millions of children across the state every day, enabling them to focus on their education and to grow up active and healthy.”

“There were more than 224,000 young children from low-income families in school readiness programs in Florida last year. Most of those children were ages birth to 5,” said Office of Early Learning Executive Director Rodney MacKinnon. “Early learning coalitions are keenly aware of the importance of an early start when it comes to fighting childhood obesity. They work with partner organizations across the state to educate families and encourage child care providers to incorporate healthy eating and movement into daily activities.”

To accelerate our progress in promoting childhood healthy weight state agencies together have launched Living Healthy in Florida. This initiative is the first of its kind to combine the resources of elected officials, state agencies, nonprofits and the private sector to promote healthy eating, good nutrition and active living in our state in an effort to create healthier communities and reduce long-term healthcare costs associated with chronic disease. More information on the initiative can be found on their [website](#).

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Healthiest Weight Florida is a public-private collaboration bringing together state agencies, not-for-profit organizations, businesses and entire communities to help Florida's children and adults make consistent, informed choices about healthy eating and active living. Learn more about the Healthiest Weight Florida initiative at [www.healthiestweightfl.com](http://www.healthiestweightfl.com).

The Department of Health works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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