

Pinellas County School Elementary Health Survey

The Elementary Health Survey was designed to determine the prevalence of health risk behaviors among elementary school children and to provide comparable data to the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS).

What is Elementary Health Survey?

This survey was developed and administered by the Pinellas County School System for the Steps to a Healthier Florida program. The objective was to establish a baseline and track health risk behaviors among elementary school children. The survey was administered to third grade students in the Steps Intervention Area (IA) schools in spring 2003. The questionnaire consisted of 30 questions and was administered by the physical education teachers.

Who were the Respondents?

The survey was administered to 1250 third grade students in the Steps intervention area schools. Parents were notified about the survey in advance and were given the option to exclude their children.

The survey respondents consisted of 48% females and 52% males. The majority of the survey respondents were either 8 years old (27%) or 9 years old (53%).

What were the survey questions?

The health survey included 30 questions that covered behaviors that can broadly be grouped into the following health risk areas: 1) Physical activity; 2) Injuries; 3) Diet and nutrition; 4) Tobacco use; 5) Alcohol and other drug use; and 6) Miscellaneous.

Summary of Results

Physical activity:

Play outside: 31% of the third graders get less than the recommended 60 minutes of daily moderate physical activity.

Watch Television: 44% of the third graders watch 3 or more hours of television on an average school day and 18 % watch 2 hours of television.

Video or Computer games: Approximately one of five (21%) third graders play video or computer games for 3 or more hours on an average school day.

Member of a sports team or a physical activity group: 57% of the students have been a regular member of a sports team or a physical activity group.

Injuries:

Bicycle helmet use: 40% of students who ride a bicycle always use a helmet and 31% never use a helmet.

Roller blade, scooter, or skateboard helmet use: 34% of the third graders who rollerblade, ride a scooter, or skateboard always use a helmet and 39% never use a helmet.

Played with matches or lighters without adult permission: 12% of the third graders have played with matches or lighters without adult permission.

Ever carried a weapon while not in school: 13% of the students have carried weapons such as a gun, beebee gun, pocket knife, or bow and arrow.

Swimming: 44% of the third graders have been swimming without adult supervision.

Diet and Nutrition:

Breakfast: 85% of the students eat their breakfast.

Meals in a restaurant: 45% of the students eat their meals in a restaurant at least 2-3 times a week.

Milk Consumption: 63% of the third graders consume less than the recommended 3 glasses of milk per day.

Treat foods: 49% of the third graders eat treat foods such as chips, candy, soda, cookies, and donuts at least 2-3 items a day.

Tobacco Use

Cigarette or cigar smoking: 4.2% of the third graders have tried cigarettes or cigars and 1.5% have smoked everyday for a week or more.

Alcohol and other drug use

Alcohol use: 15.6% of the third graders have had a drink of beer, wine, or alcohol, other than a few sips.

Marijuana use: 1.2% of the third graders have tried marijuana.

Miscellaneous

Hand washing: 84% of the third graders wash their hands before eating.

Recommendations

- 1) Health Risk behaviors such as physical inactivity, poor nutrition, tobacco and alcohol use start early and it is imperative that health education and prevention programs begin early in students' lives.
- 2) These findings suggest that current programs such as Steps should be reinforced and expanded.
- 3) Institute more age appropriate preventive programs.
- 4) Schools should implement programs and policies that encourage physical activity, healthier food options during lunch, and eliminate tobacco, alcohol and other drugs use.
- 5) Provide children with healthier alternatives to watching television and/or playing video games.