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Dietary, Physical Activity, and Lifestyle Behaviors of Rural African American South Carolina Children

Saundra Glover PhD¹ ... Shardae Williams³

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Overweight and obese children continue to be a growing problem, and differences exist, especially among racial and ethnic groups. Even though a poor diet and lack of physical activity are attributable factors to being overweight among children, indications exist that geographic location may also be important. In rural areas in the United States, childhood obesity is often higher than the national average. This study analyzed dietary, physical, activity, and lifestyle behaviors of rural African American children and their risk for becoming overweight. This study is a cross-sectional convenience sample of 98 students from a rural county in South Carolina in 2002. Findings showed rural female children were significantly more likely than rural male children to engage in physical activity for at least 20 minutes per day (odds ratio, 5.57; $p = .0056$). Given the increase in the prevalence of obesity especially among minority populations, the need exists to develop culturally appropriate nutrition and exercise interventions to assist children in a healthy weight loss attempt. Increased prevalence of obesity and other diseases among African Americans warrants aggressive interventions to reduce risk factors in this vulnerable population.

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Keywords

children/adolescents; obesity; racial disparities; nutrition; exercise

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