



# CHILDHOOD OBESITY PREVENTION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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## Learning at home during the COVID-19 pandemic should include reading, writing, arithmetic, and daily physical activity!

For more than 15 years, Georgia has been working to address childhood obesity. In 2009, the Georgia legislature passed the Student Health and Physical Education (SHAPE) Act. In part, it requires Georgia physical educators to collect annual fitness assessment data, including height, weight, and aerobic fitness measurements on all children enrolled in physical education classes in public elementary, middle, and high schools. Under the law, the Georgia Department of Education is required to submit an annual report on student fitness to the governor.

At the time of year when annual fitness assessments would often be occurring, students are learning from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many students may not be getting the same amount of physical and fitness-promoting activity they would in school.

Of the 1,579,243 students enrolled in Georgia schools, 1,357,270 are enrolled in physical education class (86%). This includes 94.5% at the elementary level, 72.3% at the middle school level, and 63% at the high school level.\*<sup>1</sup> Fitness data has been collected from more than 1 million Georgia students annually since 2012. It shows that while progress has been made, more physical activity and healthy nutrition behavior is needed among school-age children in the state. In 2017:

- Only 56.6% of boys and 45.3% of girls in the state had healthy aerobic capacity
- 57.9% of boys and 58.4% of girls have healthy weight

In 2014, the Georgia Health Policy Center updated its model simulating the impact of various health policies on the future prevalence of childhood obesity.<sup>2</sup> The model shows that with no change in policy, the prevalence of obesity among children and adolescents in Georgia will remain at 18% through 2034. Additionally, the model shows that mandating daily physical education at school would reduce the prevalence of childhood obesity to 12%, while integrating moderate to vigorous physical activity into elementary school classrooms would reduce the prevalence to 10% and have the largest projected impact on childhood obesity. Why? Because it would impact almost 100% of children in elementary school with 10 to 20 minutes of additional movement each day!

With schools closed for an extended period during the pandemic, it is important that children participate in a variety of fun movement and physical activity opportunities every day. An increase in food intake or decrease in movement of just 90 to 125 kilocalories per day can make a difference in a child's weight and long-term health.<sup>3</sup>

As a technical assistance provider to more than 147 Georgia elementary, middle, and high schools in 57 different school districts through Georgia Shape grants, the Georgia Health Policy Center is pleased to point families to free partner resources that can help children remain physically active during the COVID-19 pandemic.



\*Some middle and high school students only receive physical education for half of the school year.

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# Online Resources to Keep Kids Active During Remote Learning

## Darebee

**Highlights:** Provides a workout of the day, as well as fitness diaries, exercise cards, and more. <https://darebee.com/>

## Energizers for Schools

**Highlights:** Provides classroom-based ideas to integrate physical activity into academic concepts.

Elementary school: [www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Energizers\\_K-5\\_2015.pdf](http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Energizers_K-5_2015.pdf)

Middle school: [www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/resource/energizers-for-schools/](http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/resource/energizers-for-schools/)

After-school: [www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/After\\_School\\_Energizers.pdf](http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/After_School_Energizers.pdf)

## Georgia State University College of Education & Human Development Online Resources

**Highlight:** Physical Education e-Learning for Students' Wellness

High School Modules: [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/13Jmlxcs7FVpHR5krm3PwyJy\\_Dv-iycoN](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/13Jmlxcs7FVpHR5krm3PwyJy_Dv-iycoN)

## GoNoodle

**Highlights:** Engages children with free movement and mindfulness videos tailored to kids' different ages, interests, skills, and abilities.

[www.gonoodle.com/](http://www.gonoodle.com/)

## HealthMPowers Virtual Learning Website

**Highlights:** Healthy eating, hand-washing, and physical activity resources for teachers and families of early care, elementary, and secondary school students.

<https://healthmpowers.org/services/resources/>

## HOPSports

**Highlights:** HOPSports created the Brain breaks online platform for teachers that includes sport, dance, and fitness skills, as well as nutrition education.

<https://brain-breaks.com/>

## Online Physical Education Network (OPEN) Active Home Resources

**Highlights:** Active fun for families, activities designed for physical/social distancing, and elementary and secondary physical education packets.

<https://openphysed.org/activeschools/activehome>

Early Care — <https://openphysed.org/movement/ec>

<sup>1</sup> Georgia Department of Education. Annual fitness assessment program report. <https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/Documents/HPE/Governor%27s%20Report%202017%20%20Complete.pdf>. Published 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Powell, K.E., Kibbe, D.L., Ferencik, R. ... & Minyard, K. (2017). Systems thinking and simulation modeling to inform childhood obesity policy and practice. *Public Health Reports*. 132;2\_suppl: 33S-38S.

<sup>3</sup> Wang YC, Gortmaker SL, Sobol AM, Kuntz KM: Estimating the energy gap among US children: a counterfactual approach. *Pediatrics*. 2006, 118: E1721-E1733. 10.1542/peds.2006-0682.