

## 2 out of 5 children lack healthy BMI, reveals the 9th Annual Health Survey by EduSports

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The latest Annual Health Survey by EduSports' which was launched 9 years ago to understand the overall health and fitness levels of children in schools revealed that children are displaying alarmingly poor fitness levels all across India. The nationwide study has covered 1,53,441 children in the age groups of 7 years to 17 years from 279 schools across 113 cities and towns in 21 states.

The study showed that only 60% of the children had healthy BMI. Although the current data is alarming, there has been a 50% (40 % to 60 % of children having healthy BMI) increase in the number of children with a healthy BMI. There has also been an improvement in the number of children having ideal upper body strength (50 % increase), flexibility (33 % increase) and anaerobic capacity (100 % increase).

The survey further shows that only 47 % government school children had a healthy BMI (as compared to 61% for private school children). The percentage of government school children who are underweight is exceedingly high (39 %) as compared to private school children (15%). Despite this, government school children are healthier than the private school children in various fitness parameters such as lower body strength, flexibility, aerobic and anaerobic capacity.

Across all regions more than two-third of the children do not have healthy BMI. The northern, western, central and southern parts of India all have shown close to 40 % of children having poor BMI. The east lags behind with 51 % children having unhealthy BMI.

The survey further showed that girls fared slightly better with 63% of them having healthy BMI as compared to 59 % of the boys. Girls were observed to be fitter than boys in several fitness parameters such as upper body strength, abdominal strength and flexibility. However, the boys outscored the girls in the fitness parameters of lower body strength and aerobic capacity.

Although the study shows a cause for concern, it also highlights the ways in which we can rectify the situation. A comparative fitness assessment for all children was done before and after their annual summer break. It was observed that during break, there was a drastic drop in the fitness levels of children across all the parameters. This shows that schools play an important role in helping to keep children healthy. When children lose access to the sports infrastructure and regular sports programs that schools provide, their fitness is negatively impacted.

Mr. Saumil Majmudar, CEO and co-founder, EduSports says “Although the high percentage of unhealthy children is alarming, we still have an indication of how we could rectify the situation. The study reinforces the idea that schools, by providing play spaces, act as catalysts for maintaining the fitness of children. In the current context, when there is a lack of safe play-spaces in many cities, schools are the only places where children have the opportunity to play. This also reinforces the need and importance of effectively utilizing and structuring any available play time in schools so that all the children benefit from the program – and not just the school teams.”