

National Core Indicators® Data Highlight

What Do NCI Data Tell Us About the BMI of People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities?

In the 2018-19 NCI In-Person Survey, 30% of respondents were determined to have normal or healthy weight based on their body mass index (BMI); 28% were considered overweight and 36% were considered obese—also based on BMI. Among states, the percentage of respondents considered obese ranged from a low of 29% to a high of 48%, and those considered overweight ranged from 23% to 35%. People who live in ICF/DDs or other institutions were less likely to be obese (25.5%) than people who live in their own home or apartment (44.8%). *

Why does it matter? The fact that over 60% of the sample are outside the normal or healthy weight range is concerning. We know that people who are overweight are more susceptible to a range of chronic illnesses such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and cardiovascular disease. During the COVID-19 pandemic, people with these conditions were more vulnerable to serious illness. We also know that people with IDD face challenges maintaining a normal weight including a greater likelihood of mobility impairments, medication side effects, and for some, narrow food preferences or a need for specialized diets. The numbers of people with IDD who are overweight may have increased during the pandemic since we know that 61% of the general population says they have gained weight during this period.



Questions to ask: Is your state including an individual health and wellness assessment in the yearly person-centered plan? Have you developed education programs for people with IDD, DSPs and families regarding wellness regimens—including the use of personal technology (apps, smartphones, and tablets) as tools that can help people better manage their personal health and wellness? Have you explored supporting self-advocate wellness ambassadors to help inform and support other self-advocates? Have you developed plain language and video material regarding good nutrition and exercise?

Want to know more?

Bethesda. (n.d.). Nutrition Tips for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

bethesdalocal.gov/blog/nutrition-tips-for-people-with-intellectual-and-developmental-disabilities-2/

Gumstrup, B., Demchak, M.A. (2017). Obesity, Nutrition, and Physical Activity for People with Significant Disabilities. *Physical Disabilities: Education and Related Services*, 36(1), 13-28.

files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1143113.pdf

The Arc (2014). HealthMeet: Top 5 Exercises for People With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

<https://thearc.org/healthmeet-top-5-exercises-people-intellectual-developmental-disabilities/>

Rizzolo, M.K. (2018). Health and Wellness: Tools for Self-Management. Everything you need to know about self-management of health for people with disabilities. Council on Quality and Leadership.

c-q-l.org/resources/newsletters/health-wellness-tools-for-self-management/

Segal, M., Eliasziw, M., Phillips, S., Bandini, L., Curtin, C., Kral, T., Sherwood, L.S., Stanish, H., and Must, A. (2016). Intellectual disability is associated with increased risk for obesity in a nationally representative sample of U.S. children. *Disability Health Journal*, 9(3), 392-398. doi.org/10.1016/j.dhjo.2015.12.003

*While not a perfect measure for obesity, BMI is the common tool used by public health officials to categorize body fat and obesity-related health risk among populations