

## EATING BEHAVIORS

### U.S. HEALTHY PEOPLE YEAR 2000 OBJECTIVES

- 1.7 Increase to at least 50% the percentage of overweight people aged 12 years and older who use sound dietary practices combined with regular physical activity to attain appropriate body weight

On the other end of the scale, some youth are at risk for underweight and may also be at risk for eating disorders, which frequently occur along with depression and anxiety disorders, and can result in a wide range of physical health complications including heart disease and kidney failure.<sup>10</sup> Studies indicate that eating disorders frequently develop during adolescence. Recognition of the symptoms and understanding of eating disorders as real and treatable disease is critical to identifying and helping young people at risk.<sup>9</sup>

The next five questions examine the occurrence of weight control behaviors among youth. Two of the behaviors, exercising and eating less or eating foods low in fat, are generally healthy approaches, although in excess, they could be associated with eating disorders. The next three behavior questions focus on questionable or downright unhealthy approaches to weight control.

### WHAT OREGON STUDENTS REPORTED

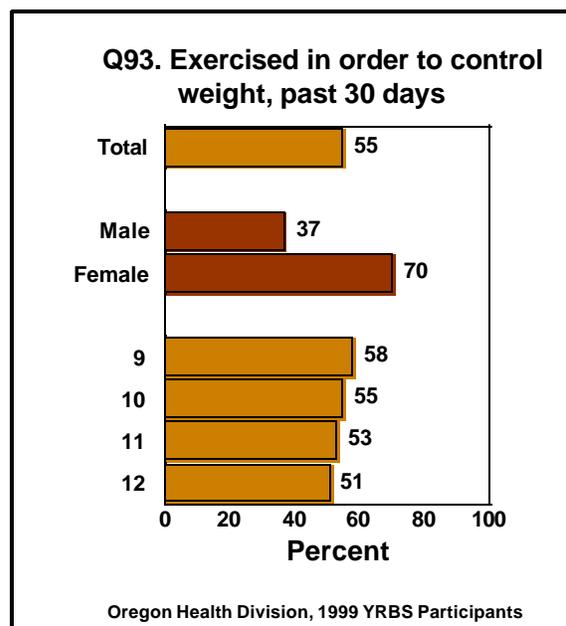
#### **Q93. During the past 30 days, did you exercise to lose weight or to keep from gaining weight?**

Over half (55 percent) of Oregon 1999 YRBS participants reported that they exercised to lose or keep from gaining weight 30 days prior to the survey.

Almost twice as many females as males reported exercising for the purpose of weight control (70 vs. 37 percent).

The proportion of students who were exercising to lose or keep from gaining weight decreased slightly by grade.

The percentage of students reporting that they exercised for weight control reasons was similar in Oregon's 1997 YRBS, (54 percent), and in the national 1999 YRBS participants (58 percent).

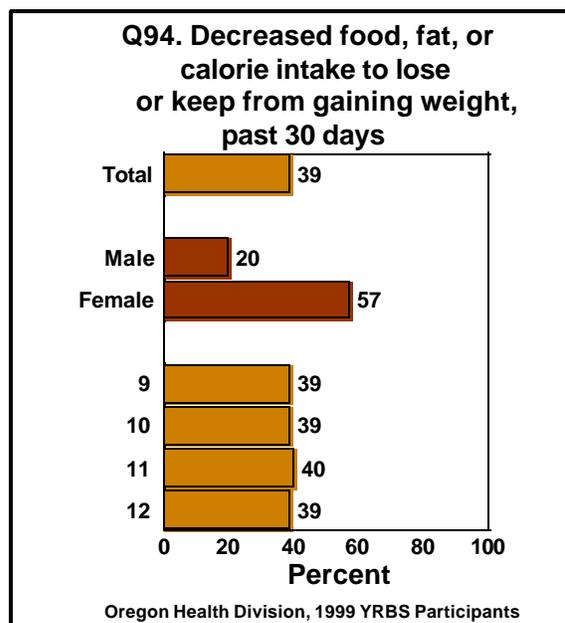


**Q94. During the past 30 days, did you eat less food, fewer calories, or foods low in fat to lose weight or to keep from gaining weight?**

Of Oregon 1999 YRBS participants, 39 percent reported decreasing their food, fat, or calorie intake in order to lose weight or keep from gaining weight in the 30 days prior to the survey.

Nearly three times as many females as males decreased their food, fat, or calorie intake for weight control reasons (57 vs. 20 percent). The proportion of students who reported this behavior did not vary much by grade.

A similar percentage of national 1999 YRBS participants (40 percent) reported decreasing their food, fat, or calorie intake in order to control their weight.



Because one of the Healthy People 2000 goals is to increase the percentage of overweight youth and adults who use both regular physical activity and sound dietary practices to attain an appropriate weight, this report also examines student reports of exercise and decreased food, fat or calorie intake to control weight as a marker of sound diet and exercise practices.

However, it should be noted that the amount of exercise and dietary practice is unknown. In all weight categories, females were more likely to report use of these behaviors than males. Males and females who were overweight or at risk of being overweight were most likely to report efforts to control weight.

<b>Body Mass Index Group</b>	<b>Exercised or decreased food, fat, or calorie intake in order to control weight</b>			
	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Exercised</b>	<b>Decreased intake</b>	<b>Both</b>
<b>Underweight or at risk of underweight</b>	<b>M</b>	15%	9%	7%
	<b>F</b>	36%	34%	23%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Within Average range</b>	<b>M</b>	29%	14%	10%
	<b>F</b>	69%	56%	47%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>Overweight or at risk of overweight</b>	<b>M</b>	67%	41%	35%
	<b>F</b>	83%	73%	64%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>46%</b>

**Q95. During the past 30 days, did you go without eating for 24 hours or more (also called**

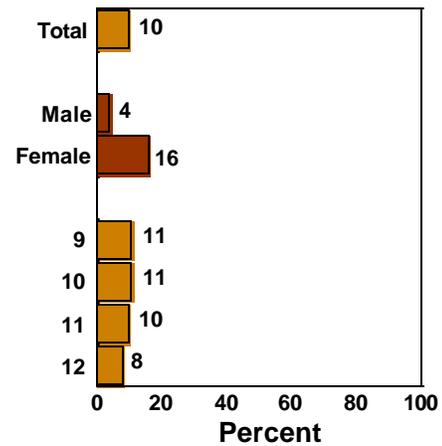
***fasting ) to lose weight or to keep from gaining weight?***

Of Oregon 1999 YRBS participants, 10 percent reported that they went without eating, or fasted, for 24 hours or more to lose or keep from gaining weight.

Four times as many females as males fasted for the purpose of weight control (16 vs. 4 percent).

Fasting in order to control weight decreased somewhat as grade increased. Ninth and 10<sup>th</sup> graders were 27% more likely to report fasting than 12<sup>th</sup> graders.

**Q95. Fasted for 24 hours or more in order to control weight, past 30 days**



Oregon Health Division, 1999 YRBS Participants

***Q96. During the past 30 days, did you take any diet pills to lose weight or to keep from gaining weight? (Do not include meal replacement products like Slim Fast)***

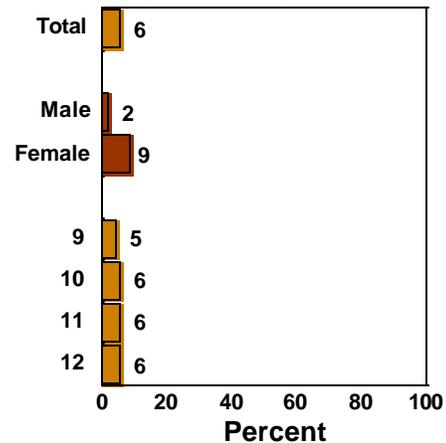
Six percent of Oregon 1999 YRBS participants reported taking diet pills to lose weight during the 30 days prior to the survey.

Nearly five times as many females as males took diet pills (9 vs. 2 percent).

There was little difference by grade in the proportion of students reporting this behavior.

Among national 1999 YRBS participants, 8 percent reported taking diet pills to lose or keep from gaining weight.

**Q96. Took diet products in order to control weight, past 30 days**



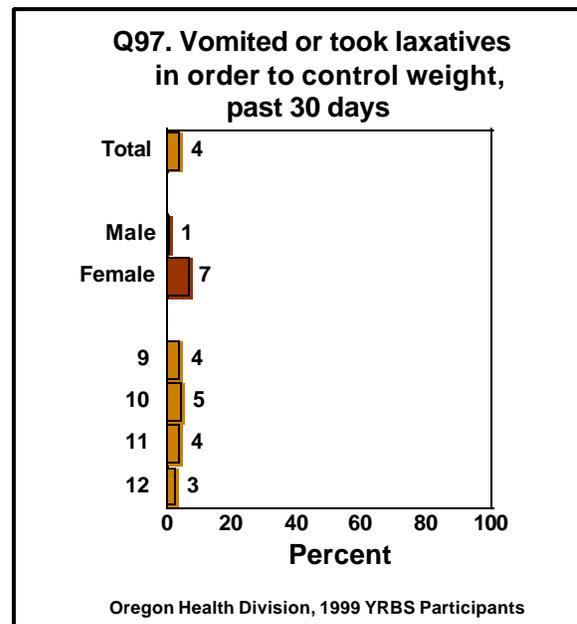
Oregon Health Division, 1999 YRBS Participants

**Q97. During the past 30 days, did you vomit or take laxatives to lose weight or to keep from gaining weight?**

Four percent of Oregon 1999 YRBS participants reported that they had vomited or taken laxatives in order to lose or keep from gaining weight during the 30 days prior to the survey.

Seven times more females than males reported vomiting or taking laxatives as a method of weight control (7 vs. 1 percent). There was little difference in the occurrence of this behavior by grade, although a slightly lower proportion of 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported vomiting or taking laxatives for the purpose of controlling their weight.

Nationally, a similar percentage of 1999 YRBS participants (5 percent) reported vomiting or taking laxatives as a method of weight control.



## WHAT OREGON STUDENTS WROTE

### About eating behaviors and weight

"I think the questions regarding weight are misleading. A lot of people like myself, are average weight, but would wish to drop 5 lbs or less. Answering truthfully on those 2 questions makes us out to be dieting freaks, which we are not."

"All I know is the majority of teenagers that I know don't have what an adult would call a 'healthy' lifestyle... lack of sleep, drugs, sex, alcohol, tobacco, etc. I have been admitted to a hospital for anorexia. I hope this survey helps you out."

"You might want to ask if you've ever had an eating disorder."

"Teen girls as a whole, have serious emotional problems. People always tell us we are fine the way we are, but then they put stick figure women like Kate Moss and Claudia Schiffer in advertisements. What do people expect from us?"

"Students should have access to places where they can find info about overeating disorders!"

"I think girls in my school think too much about their weight. I mean they are tiny and think they are fat. That is a big problem at my high school."

"My unhealthy behavior is being bulimic and not telling anyone. I think it would help if the school had a speaker on that issue or something. Some of my friends have eating disorders too and I think the school just avoids the problem."