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UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland Study Spotlights Preschoolers With Severe Obesity

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UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland Study Spotlights Preschoolers With Severe Obesity

Oakland, CA (March 5, 2018) – A new study by UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland researcher Dr. June Tester examined national data on preschool-aged children from 1999 to 2014 to highlight characteristics of children with the highest degree of obesity and found a strong correlation between the amount of "screen time" these children are exposed to and the likelihood of them being severely obese. The study also found that preschoolers with severe obesity are also more likely to be of an ethnic or racial minority and more likely to be living in poverty.

The study, "[Characteristics of Children 2 to 5 Years of Age With Severe Obesity](#)" is published in *Pediatrics* (February 26, 2018).

Although the prevalence of severe obesity among preschool-aged children has been previously reported, this is the first study to better characterize this high-risk group in comparison to normal weight peers separately from those who are overweight or have less severe obesity. It has been shown that socio-demographic factors, like living in poverty or being from a racial/ethnic minority, are generally associated with excess weight in children. The analysis from Dr. Tester's team highlights the striking dose-response of socio-economic disadvantage that seen in preschoolers in the US.

These children- the 1 in 50 preschoolers in the US who have "severe obesity" - were determined to be a priority area by the Expert Exchange Workgroup on Childhood Obesity, which was a collective of obesity clinicians convened by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Children's Hospital Association.

Notably, the study looked at behavioral factors such as screen time. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children in this age group should not be engaging in more than 2 hours of screen time (TV and all other types of screens combined) in a day, and regardless of weight, over half of American preschoolers are exceeding this recommendation. But when the researchers looked at "super-users", or children engaged in more than double the recommended screen time, they found that while 14.7% of normal weight preschoolers were engaged in 4 or more hours of screen time, this was true for 27.1% of the children with severe obesity, meaning that they had twice the odds of being a "super-user." More than any other factor studied in this analysis, increased amounts of screen time were associated with a stepwise increase in odds of overweight, obesity and severe obesity, highlighting the need to maintain focus on screen time use in preschool-aged children.

About UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland
UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland (formerly Children's Hospital & Research Center Oakland) is a premier, not-for-profit medical center for children in Northern California, and is the only hospital in the East Bay 100% devoted to pediatrics. UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland is a national leader in many pediatric specialties and is one of only five ACS Pediatric Level I Trauma Centers in the state. The hospital has one of largest pediatric intensive care units and pediatric rehabilitation units in Northern California. It is also a leading teaching hospital with an outstanding pediatric residency program and a number of unique pediatric subspecialty fellowship programs. UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland's research arm, Children's Hospital Oakland Research Institute (CHORI), is internationally known for its basic and clinical research. CHORI is at the forefront of translating research into interventions for treating and preventing human diseases.

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