

FEATURE – CHILDREN’S HEALTH AND GROWTH PATTERNS

INTRO: The U.S. Department of Agriculture is cooperating with the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas to determine health standards for children. The USDA’s Bob Ellison has more from Houston. (1:36) (refeed)

CHILDREN HAVE CHANGED OVER THE LAST TWO GENERATIONS. RESEARCHERS AT THE BAYLOR COLLEGE OF MEDICINE AND THE U-S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE’S AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE ARE STUDYING CHILDREN AND TEENS TO SEE HOW THOSE CHANGES AFFECT CHILDHOOD AND ADULT HEALTH. RESEARCHERS ARE STUDYING BONE DENSITY, MUSCLE MASS AND HEIGHT AND WEIGHT VARIATIONS.

Dr. Kenneth Ellis, Baylor College of Medicine/USDA ARS: We thought it would be good to see what the contemporary population looked like. Also the older standards couldn’t tell us anything about variation. It could just give us one number for one age.

ONE FINDING IS WHAT MANY PEOPLE HAVE COME TO ACCEPT. MORE CHILDREN TODAY ARE OVERWEIGHT COMPARED TO CHILDREN IN PREVIOUS GENERATIONS.

Ellis: There’s no question that if you look at a child today and a child from ten years ago, twenty years ago or even forty years ago that when we look at our contemporary population, today’s children, they’re fatter. There’s no question about it. There are many more of them now that have an unacceptable level of body fat.

ONE FINDING WAS DIFFERENCES ACCORDING TO RACE AND ETHNICITY. ELLIS SAYS WHILE DISCUSSING THIS MAKES SOME PEOPLE UNCOMFORTABLE, THE DIFFERENCES ARE IMPORTANT TO DOCTORS.

Ellis: The black children tend to grow at a much faster rate during puberty at least for bone so their nutritional needs for calcium may be slightly different from say the caucasian group.

There’s a conflict sometimes that people think we are all the same. We are all the same in a very general concept, but we are individuals. Each of us has a very individual composition.

ONCE THE STUDY IS COMPLETED, ELLIS WANTS TO POST IT ON THE WEB FOR USE BY PEDIATRICIANS AND OTHER DOCTORS. IN HOUSTON, TEXAS FOR THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, I’M BOB ELLISON.