



## Time with friends may help prevent obesity

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BUFFALO, N.Y., Jan. 11 (UPI) -- More social time spent with friends may help adolescents keep from gaining weight, New York researchers suggest.

First author Sarah-Jeanne Salvy, assistant professor of pediatrics at the University at Buffalo, said the study involved 54 overweight and non-overweight youth -- 24 boys and 30 girls ages 9-11. Each was assigned randomly to bring a friend or to be paired with an unfamiliar peer.

Study participants worked on a computer game to earn points exchangeable for food, or for time to spend with their friend or with an unfamiliar peer.

"The task got increasingly harder and the food and social points became more difficult to earn as a way to measure how hard youth were willing to work for food or for play time with their friend or with an unfamiliar peer," Salvy says in a statement.

The study, published in the *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, found participants assigned to the friend worked for time with their friends instead of working for food.

"There is emerging evidence that a youth's social network may be uniquely relevant and influential to eating behavior and choice of activities," Salvy says.

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