



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Eat fruits, vegetables and be active for health

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health encourages adults and children to energize and mobilize those around them to pursue a healthy lifestyle by eating more fruits and vegetables and increasing physical activity.

In the United States obesity has risen at an epidemic rate during the past 20 years. Alabama was one of four states in which the obesity rate rose more than 25 percent during this time. Childhood obesity has become the most prevalent pediatric nutritional problem in the United States. One in seven young people is now obese; one in three is overweight.

Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said, "Obesity is a public health issue because an overwhelming majority (80 percent) of persons who are obese have additional health problems. The entire community benefits from access to affordable, high quality fruits and vegetables and safe opportunities for physical activity."

The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that adults and children eat two to six cups of colorful fruits and vegetables every day for better health. The guidelines also advise adults to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity every day. To prevent weight gain adults need about 60 minutes of physical activity per day.

Improving dietary practices and increasing physical activity are major strategies for preventing many of the most common chronic diseases, such as heart disease, cancer, obesity and type 2 diabetes.

Physical inactivity and unhealthy eating contribute to obesity and a number of chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, and certain cancers. In addition, the prolonged illness and disability associated with many chronic diseases decrease the quality of life for millions of Americans.

To find out how many cups of fruits and vegetables an individual adult or child needs each day, go to www.mypyramid.gov. Alabama's State Obesity Task Force has developed a comprehensive plan to reduce the worsening obesity epidemic in Alabama. To view this plan visit www.adph.org/NUTRITION/Obesity%20Plan.pdf.

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