



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104
Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5520

www.adph.org

Alabama's obesity prevalence hits 31 percent

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Miriam Gaines
(334) 206-5226

Alabama had an overall self-reported obesity level of 31 percent for adults. The obesity epidemic affects every state, according to a new CDC report. No state met the country's Healthy People 2010 goal to lower obesity to 15 percent.

New data show that nine states had an obesity rate of 30 percent or higher in 2009 – an increase over zero states in 2000, and three states in 2005. Alabama's ranking improved slightly.

The study appears in the Aug. 3 *CDC Vital Signs Report*, titled "State-Specific Obesity Prevalence Among Adults – United States, 2009." It points out that people who are obese incur \$1,429 per person extra in medical costs compared to people of normal weight, and that the nation's total medical costs of obesity were \$147 billion.

"Obesity is a complex problem that requires both personal and community action," State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson said. "People in all communities should be able to make healthy choices. To reverse this epidemic, we need to change our communities into places that strongly support healthy eating and active living."

Miriam Gaines, director of the Nutrition and Physical Activity Division of the Alabama Department of Public Health, said, "We focus on empowering Alabamians to make healthy lifestyle choices while collaborating with various community, worksite and school system partners to promote overweight and obesity prevention management throughout Alabama. Environmental and policy changes are important as we address solutions. The healthy choices must be available for our citizens to make."

The report is based on new data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. BRFSS is the states' source of data for monitoring *Healthy People 2010* objectives. To assess obesity prevalence, approximately 400,000 survey respondents were asked to provide their height and weight, which is used to calculate their body mass index (BMI). A person is considered obese if he or she has a BMI of 30 or above.

For more information on obesity rates, including an animated map, visit cdc.gov/vitalsigns or cdc.gov/obesity.

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