



*“To protect and improve  
the health and environment  
of the people of Colorado.”*

# NEWS

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of Public Health  
and Environment

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## **Colorado’s Obesity Rate Grew Faster Than the Country’s**

DENVER—Despite Colorado’s rank as one of the leanest states in the country, a report released Wednesday by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment shows the state has not escaped the national obesity epidemic. In fact, Colorado’s obesity rate climbed faster than the country’s from 1995 through 2008, rising 89 percent, while the number of obese adults nationwide rose 67 percent.

During that time, the percentage of Coloradans classified as obese nearly doubled, from 10.1 percent to 19.1 percent, or from one in 10 residents to nearly one in five. That’s still lower than the nationwide obesity rate of 26.6 percent, but Colorado’s trend is discouraging. In some regions of the state, the proportion of adults who are obese exceeds the national average. Obesity rates in Colorado children, meanwhile, exceed the rates of several other states.

The dramatic rise in obesity carries severe consequences for Coloradans. Obesity is a major risk factor for chronic diseases, including diabetes and heart disease, and a major driver of health care costs. Nationally, per capita medical spending for obese people in 2006 was 42 percent greater (\$1,429 per person) than spending for healthy weight people. The latest economic data for Colorado from 2003 estimates the obesity cost to taxpayers at \$874 million.

“Coloradans should be as concerned about the obesity epidemic as everyone else in the country,” said Eric Aakko, director of the health department’s Colorado Physical Activity and Nutrition program. “Reversing the state obesity trend will take a comprehensive, community-based approach.”

The strategies for combating obesity outlined in the new state report align with those outlined by First Lady Michelle Obama in her launch of the *Let’s Move* campaign to end childhood obesity within a generation.

The report, “The Weight of the State: 2009 Report on Overweight and Obesity in Colorado,” is a comprehensive look at obesity-related behaviors and outcomes for the state and its counties. The report provides data specific to Colorado based on age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, income and geographic region. The report identifies policies, recommended

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community interventions and successful community activities targeted to prevent obesity in Colorado.

It suggests, for example, that policymakers change land use policies so that more parks and trails are built and people have easier access to community gardens and farmer's markets; employers offer opportunities for fitness and healthier beverages and meals; schools help boost kids' daily physical activity and serve more fruits and vegetables; and families reduce television and computer screen time and increase active play time.

Such activities not only could reduce obesity, but also help prevent those Coloradans who are overweight from becoming obese. According to the report, 36.2 percent of adults in Colorado and 15.1 percent of children ages 2-14 were overweight in 2008.

More than half of Colorado adults and more than a quarter of Colorado children were either overweight or obese in 2008. State prevalence of overweight and obesity was highest among adults who were ages 45-64 years, were non-Hispanic Black or Hispanic, did not attend or graduate from college, or lived in southeast counties.

Although Colorado has become part of the national obesity problem, says Aakko, the state is working to become part of the solution. The Colorado Physical Activity and Nutrition program works with community partners to reduce obesity by increasing awareness, sharing best practices and promoting health education on the lifelong benefits of healthy eating and physical activity.

Centers for Disease Control weight definition for average adult:

<b>Height</b>	<b>Weight Range</b>	<b>BMI*</b>	<b>Considered</b>
<b>5' 9"</b>	124 lbs or less	Below 18.5	Underweight
	125 lbs to 168 lbs	18.5 to 24.9	Healthy weight
	169 lbs to 202 lbs	25.0 to 29.9	Overweight
	203 lbs or more	30 or higher	Obese

\*BMI, Body Mass Index, is a wide used measure of overweight and obesity based on height and weight calculations.

To view or download a PDF version of the 2009 obesity report, visit the Colorado Physical Activity and Nutrition program Web site at <http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/pp/COPAN/ObesityReport.pdf>

To order a free print copy of this report or other resources to promote healthy lifestyles and manage chronic disease, visit the Source for Healthy Living resource fulfillment center at <http://www.cohealthresources.org>.