

PRESS RELEASE

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Obesity Among U.S. Adults Continues to Rise

Obesity Prevalence 25 Percent or Higher in 32 States

The proportion of U.S. adults who are obese increased to 26.1 percent in 2008 compared to 25.6 percent in 2007. The data come from CDC's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), a state-based phone survey that collects health information from adults aged 18 and over.

In six states – Alabama, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee and West Virginia – adult obesity prevalence was 30 percent or more. Thirty-two states, including those six, had obesity prevalence of 25 percent or more. Only one state, Colorado, had a prevalence of obesity less than 20 percent. But no state showed a significant decrease in obesity prevalence from 2007 to 2008.

More than 400,000 U.S. adults were surveyed in the 2008 BRFSS, which is the world's largest telephone health survey. To assess obesity prevalence, survey respondents are asked to provide their height and weight, which is used to calculate their body mass index (BMI). A person is considered obese if they have a BMI of 30 or above.

“Obesity is a major risk factor for many chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes. As obesity increases among all age groups, we are seeing chronic diseases in much younger adults compared to a few decades ago, said Dr. William Dietz, director, CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity. For example, we now see young adults who suffer from heart disease risk factors and other conditions such as type 2 diabetes that were unheard of in the past.”

The 2008 BRFSS obesity data indicate that none of the 50 states or the District of Columbia has achieved the Healthy People 2010 goal of reducing obesity prevalence to 15 percent or less.

“The latest BRFSS survey data show that the obesity problem in this country is getting worse,” said Liping Pan, CDC epidemiologist and lead author of the 2008 BRFSS obesity map analysis. “If this trend continues we will likely see increases in health care costs for obesity related diseases.”

For more information on obesity trends, including an animated map, visit www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/trends.html.

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