Alaska Obesity Facts: Weight Status In Alaska

2 of every 3 adults are at risk for weight-related disease

- Obesity-related direct medical costs in Alaska are estimated at $459 million annually.¹
- Obese youth are at risk of many of the same chronic conditions as obese adults:
  - Type 2 diabetes
  - High blood pressure and high cholesterol.²
- Obese and obese children are likely to become obese adults.²
- Obese adults are at risk for heart disease and stroke, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea, several cancers, and premature death.²
- Obese youth get worse grades, have more absences from school and face more social stigmatization and discrimination compared to their peers.²
- Life expectancy researchers state that today’s younger generation will have shorter and less healthy lives than their parents for the first time in modern history due to obesity.³

Prevalence of Adult Obesity, By Public Health Region of Alaska, 2015

Though some disparities in rates of obesity exist in Alaska, obesity prevalence exceeds 26% in every region of the state.

Adult Weight Status

Trend in prevalence of overweight/obesity (BMI ≥ 25.0), obesity (BMI ≥ 30.0), and severe obesity (BMI ≥ 35.0), Alaska adults, 1991-2015

While adult obesity and overweight rates climbed steadily for nearly two decades, there has been a leveling off of these rates in Alaska adults since 2013.

Despite the leveling off, two of every three Alaska adults are at risk for weight-related diseases. More work needs to be done to maintain the progress Alaska has made and to prevent and control obesity.

Weight status is classified by using height and weight to determine Body Mass Index (BMI). BMI is strongly correlated with various metabolic and disease outcomes.⁴

For adults, weight status classifications are referenced at: www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing.

For children and adolescents, age- and sex-specific growth charts are referenced at: nccd.cdc.gov/dnpabmi/.

Source: Alaska BRFSS. Accessed through Informed Alaskans at: http://dphss.alaska.gov/dph/InfoCenter/Pages/ia/default.aspx
Too Many Children and Youth are Above a Healthy Weight

- Based on self-reported height and weight, 31% of Alaska high school students are classified as either overweight (17%) or obese (14%)—well above the Healthy Alaskans 2020 targets of 12% for overweight and 10% for obesity.5
- Objectively measured (versus self-reported) Alaska children height and weight measures reveal an even larger problem:
  - 19% of 2-4 year old WIC participants are obese.6
  - 17% of K–8th grade students are overweight and another 18% are obese in the Anchorage and Matanuska-Susitna school districts.7

What Can Alaska Schools Worksites & Communities Do?

- **Schools:** Implement strong school wellness policies that ensure availability and marketing of healthy foods and beverages; provide all children with quality physical education.8,9
- **Worksites:** Encourage active living and healthy eating at work.9
- **Communities:** Establish community coalitions to support changes that promote active and healthy living.8

What Can Health Care Providers Do?

- Assess children’s growth status at least annually.10
- Provide obesity prevention messages and suggest healthy lifestyle interventions.10

What Can Individuals Do?

- Limit consumption of sugary drinks; eat more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins; choose water and low-fat or non-fat dairy products; limit television/screen time to no more than two hours per day; and be more physically active.

Alaskans Say the Solution Does Not Rest Solely on the Individual: Alaska adults reported that the government (54%), the food industry (75%), schools (79%), and doctors (76%) have some or a lot of responsibility for addressing obesity. Parents (99%) and individuals (92%) also are responsible.11

References