

## Obesity in Connecticut

CT is doing better than 41 other states in adult obesity rates, according to new CDC numbers. We are tied with Nevada and New York. However even at that level, one in four CT adults (24.5%) are obese, and that rate is up from 18% a decade earlier<sup>i</sup>.

Obesity results from a combination of factors. The risk of becoming obese increases if a person eats too much and does not get enough exercise, or if their diet lacks healthy food such as whole grains, fresh fruit and vegetables, and lean sources of protein.<sup>ii</sup> Obesity is also influenced by poverty and food insecurity, though the relationship is complicated.<sup>iii</sup> Genetics also influence both metabolism and the way the body experiences hunger and fullness. Even the kinds of foods we crave may be influenced by our genetic makeup.<sup>iv</sup>

### **Combating Obesity:**

Yearly costs of treating obesity-related illness in the United States are estimated to be as high as \$190 billion dollars. Efforts to combat obesity must be undertaken both nationally and on the state level. Some examples of these efforts include New York City's Mayor Michael Bloomberg policies to reduce the size of sugary drinks available in restaurants, movie theaters, and fast-food chains. Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" initiative has the potential to end obesity within a generation.<sup>v</sup>

A recent IOM report provides comprehensive recommendations to reverse the trend including integrate physical activity every day in every way, market what matters for a healthy life, make healthy foods and beverages available everywhere, activate employers and health care professionals, and strengthen schools as the heart of health.<sup>vi</sup>

Connecticut still has work to do in its battle against obesity. In 2011, the Connecticut Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that 13% of Connecticut's students were obese. The study suggested a lack of physical activity and diets lacking in fresh fruits and vegetables increased a student's risk of becoming overweight or obese. The survey recommended improving health education for

students, providing more physical education classes, and creating a “healthy school environment” to improve the health and well-being of Connecticut’s students.<sup>vii</sup>

Supporting the portions of the Affordable Care Act that offer annual funds to public health and prevention programs will help decrease the prevalence of obesity in Connecticut. Greater attention to school lunch programs and programs such as SNAP and other food assistance that aid parents in providing healthy food for their children will also help. Obesity costs Connecticut money and jeopardizes the health and well-being of Connecticut’s citizens.<sup>viii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> BRFSS, CDC, <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/brfss/display.asp?cat=OB&yr=2001&qkey=4409&state=CT>

<sup>ii</sup> Causes and Consequences. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 27 Apr. 2012. <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/adult/causes/index.html>

<sup>iii</sup> Relationship Between Poverty and Overweight or Obesity, Food Research & Action Center, <http://frac.org/initiatives/hunger-and-obesity/are-low-income-people-at-greater-risk-for-overweight-or-obesity>

<sup>iv</sup> Obesity Gene Dictates Food Choices” Miriam Research." GoLocalProv.com.

<http://www.golocalprov.com/health/obesity-gene-dictates-food-choices-miriam-research>

<sup>v</sup> New Report: Connecticut Ranks Second Least Obese State in the Nation." F as in Fat 2010 Connecticut Press Release. Trust for America's Health, <http://healthyamericans.org/reports/obesity2010/release.php?stateid=CT>

<sup>vi</sup> Accelerating Progress in Obesity Prevention: Solving the Weight of the Nation, Institute of Medicine, May 2012, <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2012/Accelerating-Progress-in-Obesity-Prevention.aspx>

<sup>vii</sup> The Obesity Epidemic and Connecticut Students. Connecticut Youth Risk Assessment Survey.

[http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/yrbs/pdf/obesity/ct\\_obesity\\_combo.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/yrbs/pdf/obesity/ct_obesity_combo.pdf)

<sup>viii</sup> The Obesity Epidemic and Connecticut Students. Connecticut Youth Risk Assessment Survey.

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