



# NEWS RELEASE

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**CONTACT:**

Kallarin Richards

## **Georgia Prepares to Combat Obesity**

*New Study Reveals State's Obesity Rate*

**ATLANTA** – A report out today from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that Georgia's obesity prevalence is 30.4 percent, up from last year's rate of 27.7 percent. No state reported an obesity prevalence lower than 20 percent in 2010. The number of states with an obesity prevalence of 30 percent or more has increased to thirteen in 2010, compared to no states with that level in 2000.

The data come from the most recent Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), a state-based phone survey that collects health information from approximately 400,000 adults aged 18 and over. The 2010 BRFSS data confirm that no state met the nation's *Healthy People 2010* goal to lower obesity prevalence to 15 percent within the past decade.

"Georgia is no different than other states facing an obesity problem. We know the answer lies in a multi-faceted approach that brings government, agencies and other partners together for a prescription of unprecedented cooperation," said Dr. Kimberly Redding, director of the Georgia Department of Public Health's (DPH) Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Program. Experts agree that obesity is rooted in social norms and behaviors, and is often a result of the cultural environment.

Since becoming a stand-alone agency on July 1, DPH has made it a priority to tackle Georgia's high obesity rate. The Department has launched the following initiatives:

- In partnership with the Governor's Office, Georgia Department of Education (DOE) and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta (CHOA), DPH is working to implement the Georgia SHAPE Act (Georgia Student Health and Physical Education Act), a public-private partnership to promote childhood fitness and build a culture of wellness among the state's youth.
- Governor Nathan Deal has selected DPH to be the lead agency responsible for his campaign to reduce obesity across the state.

- The CDC provides funding to Georgia through its Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity (DNPAO) to address the problems of obesity and other chronic diseases through statewide efforts with multiple partners. The program's primary focus is to create policy and environmental changes to increase: physical activity, consumption of fruits and vegetables, and breastfeeding; and to decrease: television viewing, consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages, and consumption of high-energy dense foods (high calorie/low nutrient foods).

Additionally, the federal government is working to reduce and prevent obesity through initiatives such as First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! campaign to address childhood obesity.

"Obesity is a complex issue, and it will take every element of society working together to reverse the epidemic," said Dr. William Dietz, director of CDC's [Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity](#). "Reducing the rates of obesity and its related complications will require an intensive and sustained effort over many years, focused on creating environments that make healthy living easier. At stake is the health and well-being of current generations, as well as those to come."

The nine states in 2009 that had an obesity prevalence of 30 percent or more are: Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma, Tennessee and West Virginia. In 2010, four more states had an obesity rate of 30 percent or more, including Georgia, Michigan, South Carolina and Texas.

The BRFSS, a CDC-supported surveillance system, collects state-level public health data and provides a way for states to monitor progress toward national and state health goals. To assess obesity prevalence, phone survey respondents were asked to provide their height and weight, which was used to calculate their body mass index (BMI). An adult is considered obese if he or she has a BMI of 30 or above. For example, a 5-foot-4 woman who weighs 174 pounds or more, or a 5-foot-10 man who weighs 209 pounds or more both have a BMI of 30 or more so are considered obese.

For more information about Georgia's obesity prevention efforts, visit [www.health.state.ga.us](http://www.health.state.ga.us). For more information on obesity prevalence, including an animated map, visit [www.cdc.gov/obesity](http://www.cdc.gov/obesity).

#### About the Georgia Department of Public Health

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is the lead agency responsible for the health of Georgia's communities and the entire population. In 2011, the General Assembly restored DPH to its own state agency after more than 30 years consolidated under other departments. At the state level, DPH is divided into numerous divisions, sections, programs and offices, and at the local level, DPH functions via 18 health districts and 155 county health departments. Through the changes, the mission has remained constant – to protect the lives of all Georgians. Today, DPH's main functions include: Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Maternal and Child Health, Infectious Disease and Immunization, Environmental Health, Epidemiology, Emergency Preparedness and Response, Emergency Medical Services, Pharmacy, Nursing, Volunteer Health Care, the Office of

Health Equity, Vital Records and the State Public Health Laboratory. For more information on DPH, visit [www.health.state.ga.us](http://www.health.state.ga.us).

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