



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

**News Release**

**NEIL ABERCROMBIE**  
GOVERNOR

---

LORETTA J. FUDDY, A.C.S.W., M.P.H.  
DIRECTOR  
Phone: (808) 586-4410  
Fax: (808) 586-4444

---

For Immediate Release: Aug. 21, 2013

13-047

**OBESITY IN HAWAII RISING ALONGSIDE NATIONAL TRENDS**

HONOLULU – According to [F as in Fat: How Obesity Threatens America's Future 2013](#), a new report released yesterday by the Trust for America's Health (TFAH) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), obesity in Hawaii continues to increase rapidly consistent with national trends and, without effective interventions, more than half of Hawaii's adults will be obese by 2030.

The report summarizes obesity rates in the United States and identifies 13 states with obesity rates above 30 percent and 41 states with rates of at least 25 percent. Every state is above 20 percent.

"While Hawaii has a lower obesity and chronic disease rate relative to many other jurisdictions, our state is following the same troubling path as the rest of the nation," said Director of Health Loretta J.

Fuddy. "Nearly one-quarter of Hawaii adults are obese, and some population groups have much higher rates. Obesity is an epidemic, and we cannot afford to sit back idly on this issue."

The TFAH report ranks Hawaii 47<sup>th</sup> among all states for adult obesity, with 23.6 percent of Hawaii adults currently obese. According to the report, adult obesity in Hawaii has increased nearly three times from what it was a little over 20 years ago. In the past year alone, obesity has risen more than seven percent and childhood obesity has also remained high (13.2 percent in 2011).

Hawaii's ethnic diversity also masks significant disparities in obesity that exist in our state with higher rates among native Hawaiians and Pacific Islander populations. While adult obesity in 2011 was 21.9 percent for the overall state, rates ranged from 6.8 percent among Chinese, to 20.6 percent among Filipinos, to 40.8 percent among Native Hawaiians.

Not only is obesity in general increasing in Hawaii, but the proportion of adults who are *morbidly* or excessively obese in Hawaii is also increasing. In 2011, there were 30,000 morbidly obese adults in Hawaii—roughly 3 percent of the population.

Increases in obesity are attributed in-part to physical inactivity and unhealthy eating. Among high school students, only 21 percent met the national recommendations for physical activity. Fruit and vegetable consumption in Hawaii also remains low; the percentage of adults who reported eating more than five servings of fruits and vegetables per day is only 11.4 percent. Among high school students, it was 17.5 percent.

Obesity is costly to our state and can lead to diabetes and other chronic conditions later in life. Eighty-two percent of adults in Hawaii have at least one chronic disease, over half have two or more, and 31.5 percent have three or more chronic diseases. Hawaii spends an estimated \$470 million annually on obesity-related medical costs, and \$770 million on diabetes-related medical costs.

“We need to move forward policy, systems and environmental changes to curb rising obesity rates and costs,” said Director Fuddy. “We must continue to work together across diverse public and private organizations, governmental agencies, and communities so healthy choices are the desirable easy decisions.”

The Department of Health recently released the *Hawaii Physical Activity and Nutrition Plan 2013-2020*, a comprehensive set of Hawaii-specific strategies designed to curb the obesity epidemic. The Plan represents the work of community members and stakeholders in obesity prevention from across the state. The plan is available on the [Department of Health's website](#) under “Publications and Campaigns” or via the following direct link: [http://health.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/DOH\\_PAN2020\\_LO.pdf](http://health.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/DOH_PAN2020_LO.pdf).

###

For more information contact:

Lola Irvin, Tobacco Settlement Project Manager  
Department of Health, Healthy Hawai'i Initiative  
Phone: (808) 586-4488  
E-mail: [lola.irvin@doh.hawaii.gov](mailto:lola.irvin@doh.hawaii.gov)