



North Carolina  
Progress Board

Obesity is not just a matter of personal health—it is a costly and deadly public health concern affecting economic productivity, state budgets and personal and family well being.

## COMPETITIVE STATUS

North Carolina's obesity rate has fallen over the last 12 years from 113% to 105% of the national average. Since 2000, North Carolina's obesity rankings have improved from 40th to 37th in the nation, and from 4th to 3rd in the Southeast region. (See [Scorecard](#) for more information.)



## PROGRESS STORY

When Joshua came home from elementary school, his mother Joyce would fix him a snack, usually cookies and milk. Joshua would eat while he worked on homework before watching television for the evening. One day, Joshua fell asleep at the kitchen table. Worried, his mother took him to the doctor the next morning. After a few tests, the doctor found Joshua was considered overweight with a body mass index (BMI) of 27 and had Type II diabetes. Joyce, also overweight, was willing to do whatever it took to get her son well. The doctor prescribed insulin therapy and a diet with more fruits and vegetables and with daily physical

activity. The family began eating more meals at home, snacking less and exercising more and watching less television. Within eight weeks, Joshua lost 15 pounds, reducing his BMI to 24 and was able to control the diabetes without insulin. Joyce also lost a lot of weight. Overall, the two reported feeling better and enjoying life more!

## KEY FACTS

30% of U.S. adults 20 years of age and older—over 60 million people—are obese (National Center for Health Statistics). If this trend is not reversed within 50 years, obesity could cut average lifespan by 2-5 years. Together obesity, poor nutrition and/or physical activity:

- Incur annual healthcare costs of \$117 billion in US and \$2.1 billion in NC
- Account for about 10% of Medicaid costs
- Increase an individual's healthcare costs by 36% and medication costs by 77%
- Increases risk for certain health problems (i.e. hypertension, Type II diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke, gallbladder disease, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea & respiratory problems) with the average American adult spending \$350 annually on obesity related medical treatment
- Elevates chances for at-risk and overweight children to suffer from depression, anxiety, social angst, diabetes and other health problems, and they are more likely to grow up to be obese adults. An overweight child in NC is likely to require over \$200,000 in added medical expenses in his or her lifetime

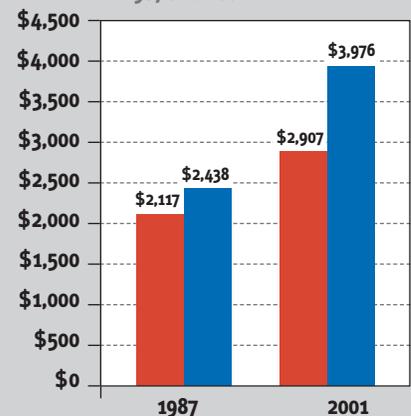
This issue affects particular segments of the state in different ways. ([Click here to learn more.](#))

**NC INITIATIVES** Several organizations are working to address this issue in NC, including: NC Dept. of Health and Human Services, counties and school districts. ([Click here to learn more.](#))

## LINKS

[Centers for Disease Control](#)  
[North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund](#)  
[Fit Together North Carolina](#)  
[Eat Smart, Move More North Carolina](#)  
[Be Active North Carolina](#)

Per Capita Health Care Spending  
(in 2001 dollars) for Normal-Weight  
and Obese Adults (Age >18)  
in 1987 and 2001



— Normal weight (BMI 18.5 to 24.9)  
— Obese (BMI >30)

Source: Thorpe et al. (2004)

**IMPERATIVE 1: Healthy Children and Families**  
**GOAL 1.2: Encourage Healthier Lifestyles**

For other products concerning this issue, [click here.](#)

## NC INITIATIVES

**Youth Overweight and Obesity Prevention/Reduction Initiative – Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF):** initiated three major public policies in 2005, funded by NCGA, \$300,000 annually

- State Board of Education Mandate requiring all K-8 students receive at least 30 minutes of physical activity daily (Healthy Active Children Policy)
- Legislation banning soft drinks and snack vending in elementary schools and restricts the same in middle and high schools (NCGS Senate Bill 961 enacted 08/05/05)
- Legislation establishing nutrition standards for all school meals (NCSG House Bill 855 enacted 10/01/05)

**Fit Together Obesity Initiative:** North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) and Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina partnership to address epidemic of youth obesity, three year initiative funded at \$15 million, components include:

- Fit Together NC – media campaign and content rich website
- Youth Obesity Prevention Grants –three year community based grant program to assist schools and communities
- Fit Community – grant program recognizing municipalities efforts to promote healthy living programs and policies
- Fit Families NC: A Study Committee on Childhood Overweight and Obesity

**Eat Smart Move More...North Carolina Initiative:** NC Division of Public Health Physical Activity and Nutrition Branch – five-year plan with specific and measurable goals:

- Increase healthy eating and physical activity opportunities with supportive policies and environments
- Increase the percentage of North Carolinians who are at a healthy weight
- Increase the percentage of North Carolinians who consume a healthy diet
- Increase the percentage of North Carolina adults and children ages 2 and up who participate in the recommended amounts of physical activity

Other organizations dedicated to this cause include:

- **Be Active North Carolina** – Increase physical activity levels and healthy lifestyles through people, programs and policies [www.beactivenc.org](http://www.beactivenc.org)
- **Be Active Kids** – Provide children the tools they need to develop positive physical activity and nutrition habits for a lifetime of good health [www.beactivekids.org](http://www.beactivekids.org)
- **North Carolina Healthy Schools** – create a working infrastructure between education and health to schools and communities [www.nchealthyschools.org](http://www.nchealthyschools.org)
- **Land and Water Conservation Fund** – develop accessibility to outdoor recreation facilities [www.nps.gov/lwcf](http://www.nps.gov/lwcf)