

NC a BIG state  
by Mike DeCinti

Guess what North Carolina? According to a new report we're in the Top 10 for the fattest states in the U.S. That's right 28% of our adult population are obese. But at least we're not Mississippi! They rank first with 32% of their adult population tipping the scales. In fact the top ten is made up of all southern states.

The report, which was released Friday by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention explains that obesity is based on the body mass index or BMI, a calculation using height and weight. A 5-foot-9-inch adult who weighs 203 pounds would have a BMI of 30, which is considered the threshold for obesity.

CDC officials believe the telephone survey of 350,000 adults offers conservative estimates of obesity rates, because it's based on what respondents said about their height and weight. And according to the experts, men commonly overstate their height and women often lowball their weight.

The CDC study only surveyed adults, but results for kids are similar, most studies of obesity and children show the South has the highest rates, as well.

So why is the South so heavy? The report points to Southern eating habits, poverty and demographic groups that have higher obesity rates. The traditional Southern diet is high in fat and fried food, as well as the large concentration of rural residents and black women, two groups that tend to have higher obesity rates.

The study found that about 36% of black survey participants were obese, while 28.5% of Hispanics and 24.5% of whites were. High poverty rates in the South are considered another factor.

In today's America, poor people tend to be obese. Unfortunately, the cheapest foods tend to be calorie-heavy and ready-to-eat. While stores offering healthier and sometimes more expensive food choices often are not found in poor neighborhoods.

However, there are plenty of ways to start eating healthy without having to spend lots of money. In fact, you might even save some.

- Switch to water...tap water. Not only will you save from not buying soft drinks, but bottled water is a waste of money too. What comes out of the tap is good enough.
- Eat eggs, just not the yolks. They are inexpensive, a great lean protein and you can eat them at any meal. Other cheap lean proteins include chicken, tuna, and whey protein powder.

- Buy frozen veggies. This way you can use them when you need them, and they won't spoil. And they're just as good for you as fresh.
- Take a multivitamin for those times you don't always eat the way you should.
- Buy the generic food. They are literally made by the same company but sold directly to the grocery stores for a lot less. And when possible buy these products in bulk.
- Take food to work instead of eating out. You can buy weeks worth of lunches from the grocery store for a lot less than going to get fast food every day. Not to mention, the meals will be healthier.
- Eat less. Simple. If you start eating the right-sized portions, you will save on groceries. You won't need to buy as much food.
- Don't buy junk food. Period. If you were to look through your kitchen now I'm sure you would be able to find hundreds of dollars of junk food that serve no nutritional purpose. So if you stop buying them, not only will you lose weight, but you'll fatten up your wallet.

So although Colorado may be laughing at us right now (they are ranked the least obese state with only 18%) that's no reason to throw in the towel and give up. We can start eating healthy today and by the time the CDC conducts their 2009 survey we can show them what North Carolinians are made of.

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