

Information on Obesity

While obesity rates are alarming throughout the United States, the prevalence of this serious health condition among residents of public housing exceeds that of the general population. Contributing factors to the high incidence of obesity among residents of public housing include lack of convenient places to get healthy meals, unsafe neighborhoods for outdoor activities, few supermarkets at which to buy healthy foods, and poor facilities for exercise. These factors amplify poor lifestyle choices for this demographically at-risk population.

Facts

- Obesity has become a serious health problem in the last 20 years. In 1990, no states had an obesity prevalence rate of over 15%. By 2007, only a single state, Colorado, had a prevalence rate of less than 20%.
- The median percentage of obese adults for all 50 States, Washington, D.C. and US Territories now stands at 26.3%.
- Childhood obesity has increased dramatically as well. In 1980 the prevalence rate was 7% for 6 to 11 year olds and 5% for 12 to 19 year olds. In 2004 this increased to 19% and 17%, respectively.
- Obesity is a dangerous health condition as it is a major contributor to other health issues such as high blood pressure, osteoarthritis, high cholesterol, type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke, gallbladder disease, sleep apnea, respiratory problems and certain cancers.
- The financial impact of obesity is staggering. In the United States alone, the direct costs (treatment of illness) and indirect costs (lost wages and productivity) is estimated to be \$117 billion.

Higher Obesity Rates in Minorities and Low-Income Populations

Data from [Healthy People](#) 2010 indicates that obesity prevalence is higher among lower income individuals, minorities, women and persons with disabilities than among the general population.

The study indicates that obesity prevalence is significantly higher among African Americans, as compared to Hispanic and White Americans: 45% of African Americans were obese, as opposed to 35% of Hispanic Americans and 32% of White Americans.⁵

Individuals with an income of less than 130% of the poverty threshold (\$1,799 per month for a family of three) had an obesity rate of 35%, while the rate for those above this line was 33%.