

Adult Overweight & Obesity

More than half of all adults in Contra Costa were overweight or obese.

- In Contra Costa, men were more likely to be overweight than women.
- In the greater Bay Area, American Indian/Alaska Native, African American and Latino adults were more likely to be overweight or obese than greater Bay Area adults overall.

According to estimates from the California Health Interview Survey, 407,000 Contra Costa adults 20 years and older were overweight or obese in 2007: overweight (253,000); obese (154,000).

In 2007, more than half (56.2%) of Contra Costa adults were either overweight or obese. This was similar to the percent of overweight and obese adults in the greater Bay Area (53.3%) and California (58.4%).

Table 1 ■ Prevalence of overweight & obese adults
Adults Ages 20 Years & Older, 2007

	Overweight or Obese (BMI 25+)	Overweight (BMI 25-29.99)	Obese (BMI 30+)
Contra Costa	56.2%	34.9%	21.3%
Greater Bay Area	53.3%	34.2%	19.1%
California	58.4%	35.2%	23.2%

Estimates are not age-adjusted.

The percentages of overweight (34.9%) and obese adults (21.3%) in the county were similar to those in the greater Bay Area (34.2% and 19.1%, respectively) and the state (35.2% and 23.2%, respectively).

More men in the county were overweight or obese than women (239,000 and 168,000 respectively). Men were also more likely to be overweight or obese than women. Approximately two-thirds (66.4%) of men in the county were overweight or obese compared to less than half (46.2%) of women. The percents of obese men and women were similar, but there was a greater percentage of overweight men (44.3%) compared to women (25.8%).

Table 2 ■ Prevalence of overweight & obese adults by gender
Contra Costa adults Ages 20 Years & Older, 2007

	Overweight or Obese (BMI 25+)	Overweight (BMI 25-29.99)	Obese (BMI 30+)
Men	66.4%*	44.3%*	22.1%
Women	46.2%	25.8%	20.4%
Total	56.2%	34.9%	21.3%

Estimates are not age-adjusted.

*Significantly higher than women.

At the county level, the percent of overweight and obese adults did not differ significantly by race/ethnicity, based at least in part on small sample sizes. However, data for the greater Bay Area revealed that some racial/ethnic groups were more likely to be overweight or obese than others. The percent of overweight or obese American Indian/Alaska Native (77.2%), African American (69.0%) and Latino (68.2%) adults in the greater Bay Area was significantly higher than the percent of overweight or obese adults in the greater Bay Area overall (53.3%). A significantly lower percentage of Asian/Pacific Islander adults were overweight or obese (35.6%) compared to adults in the greater Bay Area overall and all other racial/ethnic groups listed.

These differences were due to obesity specifically. The percent of obese American Indian/Alaska Native (46.4%), African American (32.7%) and Latino (30.7%) adults was higher than adults in the greater Bay Area overall (19.1%). Asians/Pacific Islanders (6.2%) had the lowest percent of obese adults in the Greater Bay Area; lower than adults in the region overall and all other racial/ethnic groups listed.

Table 3 ■ Prevalence of overweight & obese adults

Greater Bay Area adults Ages 20 Years & Older, 2007

	Overweight or Obese (BMI 25+)	Overweight (BMI 25-29.99)	Obese (BMI 30+)
American Indian/Alaska Native	77.2%*	30.8%	46.4%*
African American	69.0%*	36.3%	32.7%*
Latino	68.2%*	37.5%	30.7%*
White	52.7%	34.5%	18.2%
Asian/Pacific Islander	35.6%**	29.5%	6.2%**
Total	53.3%	34.2%	19.1%

Estimates are not age-adjusted.

Total includes racial/ethnic groups not listed above.

*Significantly higher than the greater Bay Area overall.

**Significantly lower than the greater Bay Area overall.

The greatest numbers of overweight and obese adults in the greater Bay Area were white residents (1,395,000) followed by Latinos (677,000), Asians/Pacific Islanders (398,000), African Americans (221,000) and American Indians/Alaska Natives (21,000).

Differences in obesity also existed based on income status. Lower-income adults in the greater Bay Area were more likely to be obese than higher-income residents. In 2007, the percentage of obese adults with household incomes less than 300% of the federal poverty level (26.0%) was higher than adults with household incomes of 300% FPL and above (15.6%).

What is obesity?

Obesity is defined as excess body fat.¹ Since body fat is difficult to measure, obesity is often identified using body mass index (BMI), a number calculated from a person's height and weight.¹ Although it is not a direct measure of fatness, BMI is a fairly good indicator of body fatness for most people and is used to screen for weight categories that may lead to health problems.² An adult is considered overweight but not obese with a BMI between 25.0 and 29.9 and obese with a BMI of 30.0 or higher.² For more information about BMI, see the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention's website:

http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/adult_bmi/index.html

Why is it important?

In 2007, more than half of the adults ages 20 and older in Contra Costa were overweight or obese. Nationally, more than two-thirds (68%) of adults were either overweight or obese in 2007–2008; 34.2% were overweight and 33.8% were obese.^{3,4} The percent of obese adults in the United States has more than doubled in the last 30 years.³

Being obese has serious health implications. Overweight and obese people are more likely than others to develop a number of health issues, including high blood pressure, cholesterol problems (i.e., high low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, low high-density lipoprotein (HDL), high triglycerides), type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke, gallbladder disease, joint problems, sleep apnea and other respiratory problems and some cancers.² People who are overweight or obese are also more likely to die prematurely.⁵

Medical costs associated with obesity were estimated at \$147 billion nationwide in 2006.⁵

Who does it impact most?

In the greater Bay Area in 2007, low-income adults and American Indian/Alaska Native, African American and Latino adults were more likely to be obese than adults in the region overall. National data indicate that racial/ethnic differences in adult obesity exist among women but not men. In 2007–2008 a greater percentage of black women (49.6%) and Mexican-American women (45.1%) were obese compared to white women (33.0%) in the United States.³

Typically, people gain weight if they consume more calories than they burn through physical activity and other activities of daily living.⁶ Although genetic factors can make certain people more likely to become overweight, individual eating and physical activity behaviors as well as the social and physical environments that influence these behaviors play significant roles in the development of overweight and obesity.⁶

What can we do about it?

Eating a healthy diet and getting adequate physical activity are important for maintaining a healthy weight. Public health recommendations suggest that any amount of activity is better than being inactive.⁷ Ideally, adults should get at least 2.5 hours a week of moderate-intensity physical activity.⁷ Eating a balanced diet that includes a variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, low-fat dairy, and limited sugar, salt and fat is also recommended for optimal health.⁸

Unfortunately, most Contra Costa adults do not get the physical activity they need. In 2008, almost one-fifth (18.6%) of Contra Costa adults reported that they did not participate in any physical activity in the past month.⁹ Only 36.0% of Contra Costa adults engaged in a minimum amount of physical activity in 2007 (i.e., 30 minutes of moderate physical activity at least five days per week or 20 minutes of vigorous activity at least three days per week).¹⁰

Adults in the region also eat fast food often and do not get enough fruits and vegetables in their diets. In 2007, more than half of Contra Costa adults (53.8%) ate fast food at least once in the past week¹⁰ and approximately two-thirds (69.9%) of adults in the Bay Area (including the counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco and San Mateo) did not eat fruits and vegetables five or more times per day.¹¹

Environmental factors, including lack of access to affordable, healthy foods and safe places to be active can make it difficult for people to eat healthy and be active.¹² The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggests that communities create environments that foster healthy lifestyle choices by implementing the following recommended strategies to increase healthy eating and physical activity:^{5,12,13}

- **Promote the availability of affordable healthy food and beverages:** Make affordable, healthier foods and beverages more available in public service venues (e.g., schools, after-school programs, child care centers, community recreational facilities and government buildings); make supermarkets more available and encourage food retailers to offer healthier food and beverages in underserved areas; and make it easier for communities to purchase foods from farms through farmers markets and other avenues
- **Support healthy food and beverage choices:** Restrict availability of less healthy foods and beverages and offer smaller portion size options in public service venues; limit advertising of less healthy foods and beverages; and discourage consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages
- **Create safe communities that support physical activity:** Improve access to outdoor recreational facilities such as parks and playgrounds; support bicycling and walking by creating bike lanes and shared-use paths and improving or installing sidewalks, walking trails, pedestrian crossings, etc.; locate schools within easy walking distance of residential areas; improve access to public transportation; and locate different kinds of public land uses near one another to decrease the distance and encourage people to walk between destinations such as home and shopping; and enhance personal and traffic safety in areas where people are or could be physically active.

Data Sources: Adult Overweight & Obesity

TABLES:

Tables 1-4: Adult overweight and obesity data was taken from the California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) 2007; retrieved 8/23/10 from <http://www.chis.ucla.edu>. Body mass index (BMI) data from CHIS is based on self-reported height and weight and was calculated by CHIS by dividing weight (in kilograms) by height squared (in meters). Greater Bay Area data include the following counties: Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano and Sonoma.

Table 4: Data presented for Latinos include Latino residents of any race. Data presented for whites, Asians/Pacific Islanders and African Americans include non-Latino residents. Not all races/ethnicities are shown but all are included in the greater Bay Area total.

TEXT:

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