



# Making a Change

In Hamilton County

[www.hcstepone.org](http://www.hcstepone.org)

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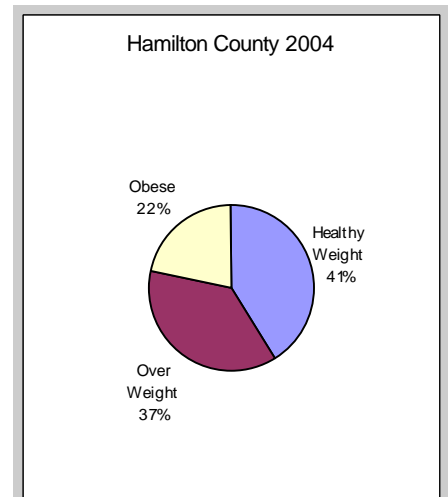
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## *The skinny on obesity*

In Hamilton County, TN, about four of every ten adults has a normal weight. The rest of the population— about six out of ten adults—is either overweight or obese. These numbers are similar to state and national figures, where the proportion of obese adults has more than doubled in the last twenty years. (Overweight is a Body Mass Index of 25 to 29; obese is a BMI of 30 or more. BMI measures weight divided by height.)



41% reported a healthy weight.

## *Why is this important?*

Obese persons are more likely to have:

- Heart Disease and Strokes
- Diabetes and Cancer
- Arthritis and Depression

## *We Can Do Better!*

**Vision:** Hamilton County residents will practice good nutrition, become physically fit and maintain their optimal weights.

**Mission:** To create a culture in Hamilton County where residents choose to practice good nutrition and exercise regularly.

**Goals:**

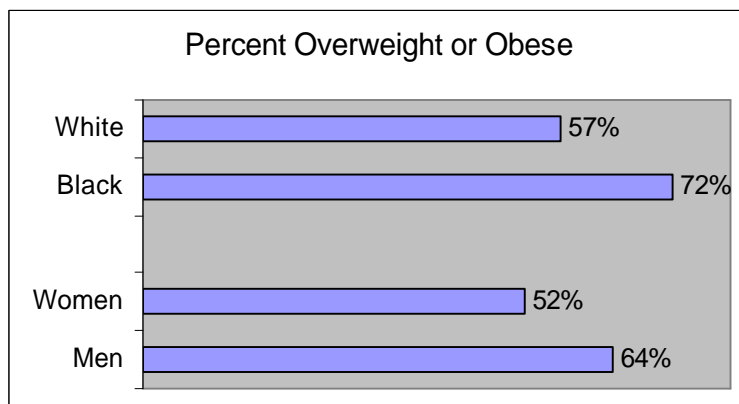
- To improve nutrition and increase physical activity thereby decreasing obesity among individuals residing in Hamilton County.
- To establish a strong organizational network of community partners which includes key leadership from government, area businesses, schools, and community based organizations.

## OBESITY COSTS

- **\$88 million** in Medical Care
  - **\$1 million** in Worker's Comp
  - **\$186 million** in Lost Productivity
- Per Year in Hamilton County!*

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## Who is more likely to be overweight or obese?



*In Hamilton County, men are more likely than women to be overweight or obese, and African Americans are more likely than white persons.*

*Persons ages 55-64 were also more likely to be overweight or obese, as were persons at lower income levels.*

## How did this happen to us?

Two words: diet and exercise.

Studies show that both **sedentary lifestyles** (less physical activity both at home and at work, plus more time in the car) and **poor eating habits** (less nutritious choices at home and while eating out) have contributed to the rise in overweight and obesity. People who live in counties marked by sprawling development are likely to walk less and weigh more than people who live in less sprawling counties—and Hamilton County has a poor sprawl index.

Men were more likely than women to be overweight or obese.

## What do people say about these problems?

An informal survey conducted in the Summer of 2004 asked over 3,000 Hamilton County residents for their views on healthy living. Early findings show that:

- 44% of the respondents were thinking about or preparing for change in physical activity and eating habits
- Almost half stated a lack of time as a key reason for not always eating healthy foods or exercising.
- While 40% of the respondents strongly agreed that “What I eat and how much I exercise can make a big difference in my health,” about 1/4 of the sample were neutral (8%), disagreed (2%) or strongly disagreed (16%).
- Many respondents thought they would benefit from: Healthy choices in vending machines and restaurants (47%), a safe place to walk that is close to home (39%), exercise ‘breaks’ and a place to shower and change at work (37%), lessons/classes/training in diet and/or exercise (35%), and a vegetable stand or grocery store convenient to home (23%).

## *What can we do?*

The **Step ONE Initiative** advocates that *all* residents of Hamilton County make a conscious decision to live a healthy lifestyle. Everyone is asked to do their part in creating a culture where we *all* choose to practice good nutrition and exercise regularly.

### **Eight Core Turning Points** for lifestyle changes:

1. All county residents practice good nutrition and exercise regularly: by eating five fruits and vegetables daily, and by walking or doing some other type of exercise every day.
2. All employers create healthy work environments, including participation in worksite wellness promotions and activities.
3. City and county leaders design the community for active living, including walking paths, bike lanes, parks and recreation centers, and the community uses them.
4. Restaurants provide healthy menu options, and the community chooses them.
5. Vending machine companies provide healthy snack selections in all public vending machines, and the community buys them.
6. Schools involve students in 30 minutes of exercise every day, and students participate.
7. Physicians and other providers candidly confront weight, nutrition and exercise issues with their patients as a routine part of their practice, and patients follow their recommendations and advice.
8. The Public Health Department works with health providers to make nutrition and fitness education available to all county residents, and all of us learn more about eating right and staying fit.

*As County Mayor Claude Ramsey has said, “It may seem like just one step, but it’s that first step that will get us back on the road to feeling healthy, looking healthy and being healthy. It is Step One.”*

**Make a  
conscious choice  
to lead a healthy  
lifestyle.**

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### HELP STEP ONE SUCCEED!

Call 209-8088 to find out what you can do.  
Speakers and More Information Available



The Step ONE Initiative is a county-wide effort to address the problem of obesity in our community by promoting good eating habits, physical fitness and healthy lifestyles for all citizens. The Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department is working with Hamilton County Mayor Claude Ramsey and the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Regional Health Council to launch this initiative.

Claude Ramsey, Mayor,

*Hamilton County*

Irvin Overton, MPH, Chairperson,

*Regional Health Council*

Becky Barnes, Administrator,

*Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department*

## Background

In the Summer of 2004, Step ONE convened six work groups to recommend ways for different sectors to promote exercise and nutrition. Over 200 persons participated in the work groups, focusing on the areas of workplace wellness, faith-based organizations, community and neighborhood organizations, homes and families, the health care sector, and schools. Each group included a broad cross section of local residents, including individuals with special expertise in each sector. Specific recommendations of each group are available through Step ONE.

Sources: Pie chart (p. 1) and "Who's more likely" (p. 2): The Community Research Council, Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance Survey 2004. Cost information (p.1): [www.activelivingleadership.org](http://www.activelivingleadership.org) calculator, with census data input provided by the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department and medical care costs estimated from obesity data. "How did this happen" from Measuring the Health Effects of SPRAWL, Smart Growth America, 2003. "What do people say," data from the Step ONE Public Input Survey, Health Department, Summer, 2004.



*Hamilton County residents CAN lead healthy lifestyles.*