



NEWS RELEASE

**Health Commissioner
Dr. Gale Burstein**

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CONTACT: Peter Anderson / Peter.Anderson@erie.gov
Phone: (716)858-8500 / Mobile: (716) 270-7842

BURSTEIN WEIGHS IN ON ADULT OBESITY IN ERIE COUNTY

Almost 24% of County residents are obese; Obesity affects 8.5 million Adults in New York State

ERIE COUNTY, NY— Today, Erie County Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein called attention to a recent brief issued by the New York State Department of Health (“NYSDoH”) that identified rates of obesity among adults in New York State. According to the 2011 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (“BRFSS”) data, an estimated 6 in 10 adults (8.5 million people) in New York State are overweight or obese. The rate of obesity is 24.5% among all adult residents in New York; Erie County has an obesity rate of 23.9% for adult residents, with approximately 8.1% of Erie County’s adult population also having diabetes.

“These numbers should be a wakeup call for all adults, and should serve as a call to action for residents who are overweight or obese,” **said Burstein**. “Obesity is a significant risk factor for numerous chronic diseases and conditions which reduce quality of life. Heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, stroke, type-2 diabetes, sleep disorders, asthma, cancer and other serious health conditions are all linked to obesity, so people should be aware of their risk and take steps to control their weight.”

Obesity and overweight are the second leading cause of preventable death in the U.S. and could soon overtake tobacco as the leading cause of death.¹ While the rate of obesity is 24.5% among all adult NYS residents, the rates are higher among non-Hispanic Blacks (32.5%), households with an annual income of less than \$25,000 (26.8%), residents with less than a college education (27.1%), and those currently living with a disability (34.9%). In Erie County, the 2011 BRFSS revealed that 36% of the adult population was overweight, with a Body Mass Index (“BMI”) between 25-29, while 29% of the adult population was obese with a BMI equal to or greater than 30. Taken together, fully 65% of the county’s population registered as either overweight or obese.

Burstein continued, “Unless these trends change, in the future obesity will not only rob people of their quality of life, but could shorten their life expectancy by two to five years. It is troubling that many of these conditions are now being increasingly seen in children and adolescents as well, further proof that all residents, including children and adolescents, should act now to reduce their own risk factors and add quality years to their life. Weight control and healthy living is a family affair. A first simple step for everyone can be cutting out sweetened beverages, such as soda pop, from their diet.”

¹ Jia H and Lubetkin El. Trends in quality-adjusted life-years lost contributed by smoking and obesity. American Journal of Preventive Medicine 2010; 38(2): 138-144

The New York State Prevention Agenda 2013-2017 has identified reducing obesity in adults as a focus area, with an established objective of reducing obesity by 5% among adults and by 10% among adults living with disabilities. Creating community environments that promote and support healthy food and beverage choices, as well as physical activity, are the major goals of the Agenda, which also emphasizes the importance of maintaining a healthy weight beginning in childhood and continuing into adulthood.

For more information:

On the Erie County Department of Health, visit <http://www2.erie.gov/health/>

On the NYS Prevention Agenda and strategies for addressing adult obesity, visit

http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention_agenda/2013-2017/

On obesity statistics from around NYS, visit

http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/obesity/statistics_and_impact/

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