

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New Hampshire is proud of its reputation as a healthy state. However, increasing rates of overweight and obesity among our children and adults place us at long-term risk for serious health problems.

The New Hampshire Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL) Initiative is aimed at improving the health and quality of life of New Hampshire's residents. During 2007, the HEAL Initiative engaged over 200 individuals from 45 organizations and communities to develop the New Hampshire HEAL Action Plan, a blueprint for statewide efforts to assist residents in adopting and maintaining a healthy weight.

As individuals and families, we all have roles to play in developing healthy lifestyles. However, our individual efforts are supported by the communities in which we live, learn, work and play. Our schools, communities, businesses, the health care industry, and food and recreation industries can provide environments that support individuals and families in eating healthy and being physically active.

What do we mean by Healthy Eating?

Consume more fruits and vegetables every day; choose lean, low-fat or fat-free meats, poultry, and milk or milk products; and reduce intake of saturated fat, sugar, salt and alcohol.

What do we mean by Active Living?

Be physically active at least five days per week. Adults should aim for 30 minutes a day and children should be active for 60 minutes a day. Walk to and from school, park farther away and walk to destinations, take the stairs instead of the elevator—all of these add up.

The Challenge

In 2006, 22 percent of New Hampshire adults were obese while 38 percent were overweight. The combined overweight and obesity rate for New Hampshire adults was almost 61 percent. This represents over a 10 percent increase from 1999, when the combined overweight and obesity rate for New Hampshire adults was slightly above 50 percent. During 2005, 11 percent of students in grades 9–12 were overweight. These rates have steadily increased for New Hampshire adults and children over the last eight years.

Overweight children are at increased risk for diabetes, heart disease, and emotional problems and are more likely to grow up to be obese adults. Overweight and obese adults are at increased risk for chronic diseases including Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, gallbladder disease and some cancers. Adults who are obese have a 10- to 50-percent increased risk of premature death compared with healthy weight individuals.

The Plan

The New Hampshire HEAL Action Plan includes policies, practices, and communication interventions based on established best practices. Individuals and communities can work together with elected officials and others who are already doing this important work.

To assist communities further, efforts are underway to establish a HEAL Community Grant Program and a HEAL Partner Program and to develop a statewide system that would oversee priority interventions at the state and local levels.

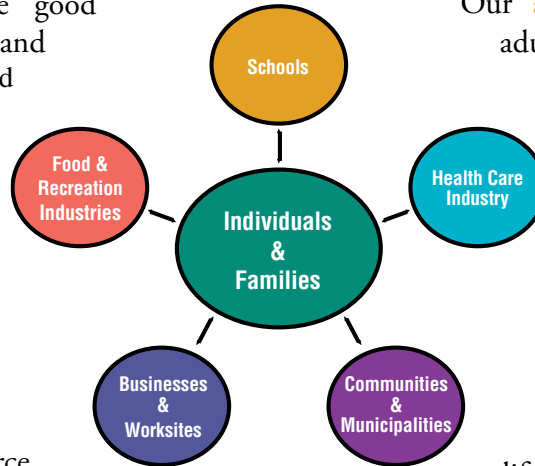
Everyone has a role to play.

This HEAL Action Plan is the first step in improving the health and quality of life of New Hampshire's residents. By working together we can have a positive and lasting impact on our health and quality of life:

Individuals & families can be good role models for healthy lifestyles and advocate for positive changes in food and recreation industries, businesses and worksites, communities and municipalities, the health care industry and schools.

The **food & recreation industries** can market and distribute healthy food and provide opportunities for physical activity.

Businesses & worksites can reinforce and promote health and wellness among their employees.



Our **schools** can educate children and adults about maintaining healthy eating habits and leading physically active lives.

The **health care industry** can encourage patients to make healthy lifestyle choices and can provide treatment and referrals to health promotion services.

Communities & municipalities can adopt policies that promote healthy lifestyles, including access to recreation programs and open spaces.

Implementing the HEAL Action Plan requires commitment and resources, but as each of us begins to make small, incremental changes in our own lives and helps to create positive changes in the places where we live, learn, work and play, New Hampshire will achieve its goal of a healthier future for all its citizens.

For more information on New Hampshire HEAL Initiative

Go to www.lightenupnh.org to find out more about HEAL and to download a copy of the HEAL Action Plan.

Funding and support for the HEAL Action planning process was provided by a collaboration of partners including HNHfoundation, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation, NH Charitable Foundation, Endowment for Health, New England Coalition for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield, New Hampshire Citizens Health Initiative, Foundation for Seacoast Health, NH Division of Parks and Recreation, and the New Hampshire Departments of Agriculture, Education, Fish and Game, Health and Human Services, and Transportation.