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NEWS RELEASE

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Report Gives Comprehensive Look at Idahoan's Health-Related Behaviors

Nearly one in four Idahoans is obese and nearly 60 percent are overweight, according to the just-released 2006 Idaho Behavioral Risk Factors report. Obesity and weight are just two of more than 20 topics looked at by the report which provides a comprehensive statewide picture of behaviors related to and risk factors for death and disease as collected by the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS).

“It really is a gauge of what kinds of health-related behaviors Idaho residents are engaging in,” says Teresa Abbott, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare BRFSS Project Director. “The report provides a tool for health officials to track health risks, identify emerging problems and develop policy and programs to prevent disease and improve treatment for Idaho citizens.”

The report, which is funded in part by the Centers for Disease Control, is generated through phone surveys conducted year-round of adults 18 and over in all areas of the state. The report looks at demographic data and behaviors and risk factors related to health issues such as asthma, diabetes, health care access, alcohol use, obesity, tobacco use, cancer screening and more.

Significant findings in the 2006 report include:

- In 2006, 59.7 percent of Idaho adults were overweight, defined as BMI of 25.0 or higher. This is a statistically significant increase since 1997 when 52.2 percent of adults were overweight.

(more)

- The percentage of Idaho adults who were obese (BMI of 30.0 or higher) also increased significantly since 1997. In 2006, 24.1 percent of Idaho adults were obese. In 1997, 16.3 percent of Idaho adults were obese.
- Cigarette smoking fell to a ten year low of 16.8 percent in 2006. This is approximately 25 percent lower than the peak level in 2000, when 22.3 percent of Idaho adults were cigarette smokers.
- Seat belt usage has increased significantly since 1997. In 2006, 73.2 percent of Idaho adults reported “always” wearing a seat belt while driving or riding in a vehicle. In 1997, this figure was 59.6 percent.
- Colorectal cancer screening for adults aged 50 and over increased significantly since 1997. In 2006, 54.2 percent of adults aged 50 and over had ever had a sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy. This is up from 38.4 percent in 1997. However, Idaho still ranks behind many states in this type and other types of cancer screening.

The report also gives behavioral information by geography, age and income levels for the state. As an example, 21.8 percent of adults in north-central Idaho smoked cigarettes in 2006, while only 9.3 percent smoked in northeast Idaho. People between the ages of 18-34 were the highest smoking age group, while people making less than \$15,000 had the greatest percentage of smokers.

The 2006 report, as well as reports dating back to 1999, is available at the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare Web site at <http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/site/3457/default.aspx>. To find the site, from the Health and Welfare home page, go to “Health” and then click on “Statistics.”

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(Editors: For additional information please contact Department of Health and Welfare Public Information Officer Emily Simmitt at 208-334-0693.)