



Jeb Bush
Governor

John O. Agwunobi, M.D., M.B.A.
Secretary

For Immediate Release
October 15, 2003

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GOVERNOR BUSH CREATES THE GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE ON THE OBESITY EPIDEMIC

Tallahassee -- Today, Governor Jeb Bush announced the creation of the Governor's Task Force on the Obesity Epidemic to address the rising rates of overweight and obesity among adults and youth. This Task Force, chaired by Dr. Zachariah P. Zachariah, will meet over the next three months to evaluate data and testimony to determine the extent of the problem in Florida and make recommendations on how to address obesity in our state. The Task Force will then present those recommendations to Governor Bush, Speaker Byrd and Senate President King.

"We are seeing a concerning rise in obesity among citizens in this state and nation," said Governor Jeb Bush. "Being overweight presents some serious health concerns and by addressing this issue now, Florida will lead the way in changing lifestyles and saving lives."

The 2001 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) shows that 14 percent of high school students are at risk for overweight and an additional 10 percent are overweight. According to the 2002 Florida Youth Tobacco Survey (FYTS), 16 percent of middle school students are at risk for overweight and 11.5 percent of middle school students are overweight.

The 2002 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) shows that 57.4 percent of adults were overweight or obese, a 63 percent increase since 1986. In 2002, over 26 percent of Florida adults were physically inactive and less than 26 percent of Florida adults ate the daily recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables.

"Diseases related to overweight and obesity cost everyone in Florida tens of billions of dollars annually," said Florida Department of Health Secretary John O. Agwunobi, M.D., M.B.A. "Addressing this issue now, means a healthier you and a healthier Florida."

Physical inactivity and poor nutrition together are the second leading actual cause of death, trailing only tobacco.

Less than 50 percent of Florida high school students attended physical education classes on one or more days during an average week. Overall, 65 percent of high school students watched two or more hours of television on an average school day, which displaces physical activity and increases caloric intake during viewing.

Overweight and obesity are causing tremendous increases in national and state health care costs including State Medicaid spending and according to the Agency for Health Care Administration, cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes alone (diseases linked to overweight and obesity) cost Floridians \$38.6 billion in 2001.

For more information on the Governor's Task Force, see the attached Executive Order.

For more information on overweight and obesity, visit www.doh.state.fl.us or www.cdc.gov.

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