

# Help Prevent Diabetes. **Treat Obesity.**

Diabetes and obesity remain significant health issues in the United States. While millions struggle with diabetes, the comorbid condition of obesity affects nearly 42% of U.S. adults.<sup>1</sup> What's true nationwide is especially true in Alabama. Treating the chronic disease of obesity can help prevent or delay type 2 diabetes and may even result in diabetes remission.

## Alabama Obesity Epidemic

- Approximately 1.9 million adults in Alabama, or 39% of the adult population, have obesity.<sup>2</sup>
- 33% of AL adults ages 65 and older have obesity.<sup>2</sup>
- The AL adult obesity rate is projected to increase to 58% by 2030.<sup>3</sup>

## Obesity in the U.S.

- Roughly 42% (110 million) of American adults are affected by obesity.<sup>4</sup>
- Nearly 15 million children and adolescents in the U.S. are affected by obesity.<sup>5</sup>
- Almost 500,000 annual deaths are attributable to excess weight.<sup>6</sup>
- Nationwide, one in three young adults between the ages of 17 and 24 cannot qualify for military service due to overweight status.<sup>7</sup>

## The Costly Consequences of Obesity

- Health care expenses in AL from obesity are estimated to reach nearly \$7.2 billion annually.<sup>8</sup>
- Obesity-related medical costs in the United States are estimated to be nearly \$173 billion each year.<sup>4</sup>
- On average, out-of-pocket costs have increased 37% over the last decade for people with large employer coverage who have an obesity diagnosis.<sup>9</sup>

## Person-Centered Treatment for Obesity

The *Standards of Care in Diabetes* of the American Diabetes Association® recommends person-centered interventions across the care continuum to ensure comprehensive support for those affected. Proven and effective treatments exist to treat and manage obesity, but health insurance and federal and state programs do not allow access to these science-based approaches.<sup>10</sup> Addressing the obesity epidemic involves a multifaceted approach to support improved health, including:

- **Screening and prevention:** Screen for obesity by documenting height, weight, waist circumference, and BMI. If needed, annual screening for obesity-related comorbidities.
- **Intensive behavioral therapy (IBT):** Offer intensive lifestyle modification program that includes personalized nutrition, physical activity, and behavioral support with a trained professional.
- **Pharmacotherapy:** Provide access to approved obesity medications according to FDA guidelines.
- **Bariatric surgery:** Provide access to bariatric/metabolic surgery as recommended by an appropriate health care professional.

## Sources:

1. National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. (2021). Overweight & Obesity Statistics. <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/health-statistics/overweight-obesity>
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023). BRFSS Prevalence & Trends Data: Home. BRFSS Prevalence & Trends Data. <https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/brfssprevalence/>
3. Ward, Z. et al.(2019). *Projected U.S. State-Level Prevalence of Adult Obesity and Severe Obesity. New England Journal of Medicine*. <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMsa1909301>
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023, September 21). Adult obesity facts. <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/adult-obesity-facts/index.html>
5. Stierman, B., et al. (2021). National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2017–March 2020 Prepandemic Data Files -- Development of Files and Prevalence Estimates for Selected Health Outcomes. (158)
6. Ward, Z. J., et al. (2022). Excess mortality associated with elevated body weight in the USA by state and demographic subgroup: A modelling study. *EClinicalMedicine*, 47, 101389. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35516446/>
7. Unfit to Serve. (2023, June 20). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/resources/unfit-to-serve/index.html>
8. GlobalData Plc. (2024). *Obesity's impact on Alabama's economy and labor force*. <https://www.globaldata.com/health-economics/US/Alabama/Obesity-Impact-on-Alabama.pdf>
9. Telesford, I. et al. (2023, July 6). How have costs associated with obesity changed over time? Peterson-KFF Health System Tracker. <https://www.healthsystemtracker.org/chart-collection/how-have-costs-associated-with-obesity-changed-over-time/#Average%20out-of-pocket%20cost%20for%20enrollees%20with%20and%20without%20an%20obesity%20diagnosis,%202011-2021>
10. American Diabetes Association Professional Practice Committee; 8. Obesity and Weight Management for the Prevention and Treatment of Type 2 Diabetes: Standards of Care in Diabetes–2025. *Diabetes Care* 1 January 2025; 48 (Supplement\_1): S167–S180. <https://doi.org/10.2337/dc25-S008>.