

# Report: NC public health lags behind

BY CHARLES TALCOTT | PUBLISHED 02/24/15 12:27AM

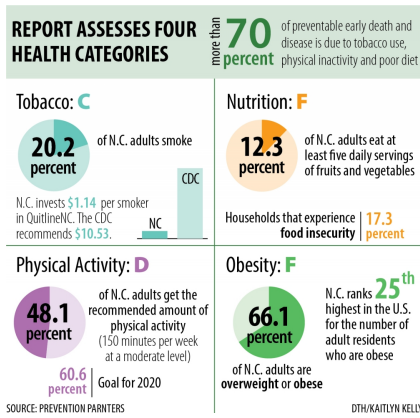


Photo by Kaitlyn Kelly

A recent study shows North Carolina is falling behind other states in preventing tobacco use, on top of having a large number of residents with poor nutrition, low physical activity rates and obesity.

Rachel Zucker, a research fellow at Prevention



policies have stagnated, compared with increases in

other states.

“As time passes, if we haven’t done much to improve in tobacco, the status quo doesn’t keep us at the same place,” she said.

North Carolina’s smoking rate of 20.2 percent is slightly higher than the national rate of 19 percent, and 60 percent of in-state smokers are trying to quit, which is markedly higher than the national average.

Adam Goldstein, a professor at UNC’s medical school, said while tobacco users have become more aware of the dangers of cigarettes, the landscape of tobacco use is changing.

“As we really focus on predominantly cigarettes, what we discover is that the tobacco industry markets all sorts of other products increasingly aggressively to at-risk individuals,” Goldstein said.

He said hookah and cigars are becoming increasingly

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popular, although cigars have also been shown to significantly increase the risk of cancer.

Goldstein said excise taxes, clean indoor-air policies and phone hotlines are among the most effective ways of curbing smoking rates.

The quit lines, Goldstein said, are helpful because they are accessible and allow smokers to contact professionals who can develop a plan to quit, or provide aids like nicotine patches. He estimated that

counseling and medication can increase quit-smoking rates by two or three times.

“For most people, quitting isn’t necessarily the hardest part; it is staying quit,” Goldstein said.

North Carolina invests \$1.14 per smoker in QuitlineNC, which is less than 11 percent of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s recommended amount of \$10.53.

The state also suffers from unhealthy eating and a lack of physical activity. Two out of every three adults are obese, and one fourth of high school students are either obese or overweight.

Zucker said obesity rates are closely tied to lack of physical activity and poor nutrition. The report card found that just 12.3 percent of adult North Carolinians eat at least five daily servings of fruit and vegetables, the recommended amount.

UNC public health professor Laura Linnan said improving North Carolina’s statewide bill of health calls for a multifaceted approach.

“Laws alone are not enough, information is not enough, access to programming is not enough by itself,” she said.

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“It is really all of those together creating a healthy social and physical environment and a supportive environment for making healthy changes.”

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stood on his knees in FRED. He  
Marty began to playman.  
To hear when Paige's imagina-  
tion gave the best of him, Chang

think (though) in games in Iowa.  
So he sat at the table and listened to  
all the coach talk. North Carolina  
men's basketball coach Roy Williams

need to be productive and one of the  
lead guys on the team. If I don't

service drawer (phone).  
On by during Johnson's fresh  
man year he had no interest in  
picking up the Posthumus. It.

for some reason. Sometimes I  
just catch myself eating a cream  
SEE BRUCE JOHNSON, PAGE 6

“Enjoy the game.”  
MICHAEL JORDAN

