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Statewide Survey Shows Most Tennesseans Link Behaviors to Health; Ready to Make Positive Changes

Governor's Foundation for Health and Wellness encourages people to get started

NASHVILLE – Tennesseans say they are aware that regular exercise, the kinds and quantity of food they consume, and the use of tobacco all affect their health, and they are ready to make changes that will lead to healthier lives according to a recent study commissioned by The Governor's Foundation for Health and Wellness as a part of its "Healthier Tennessee" initiative.

"The research tells us there is a broad awareness of the link between behaviors and health outcomes, but that awareness alone isn't motivating Tennesseans to live healthier lives," Governor's Foundation for Health and Wellness CEO Rick Johnson said. "Tennesseans need additional encouragement, help identifying concrete action steps, and social or community support to engage them in making sustained changes to their lifestyles. These are the things that the Foundation will provide."

The survey of 1,200 Tennesseans, conducted by Catalyst Healthcare Research, found that 93 percent agree or strongly agree that exercising regularly is important for their health, and 92 percent agree or strongly agree that the kinds and quantity of food they eat affects their health. Eighty-five percent disagree or strongly disagree that using tobacco regularly doesn't really affect their health.

Survey results also show that 73 percent of Tennesseans are thinking about exercising more, and 82 percent are thinking about eating healthier foods. Of those who currently use tobacco, 71 percent are considering quitting.

Although survey data shows that Tennesseans are ready to lead healthier lives and they agree eating healthy foods and getting regular exercise affect their health, *only* 8 percent report eating the recommended five or more servings a day of fresh fruits and vegetables, and only 24 percent report exercising the recommended five times a week for 30 minutes or more.

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Survey participants were also asked what they see as barriers to healthy behavior. Forty percent cited lack of time and being busy as the largest obstacles to getting more exercise. Time constraints were also cited by 17 percent of respondents as a barrier to eating healthier. Twenty-nine percent pointed to high food costs as another deterrent to eating healthier.

Catalyst Healthcare Research used a multi-modal method to collect data, garnering 49 percent of responses online and 51 percent by telephone. The survey was conducted Sept. 27 to Oct. 11 and is the first in a series of planned health and behavior studies and reports by the Foundation.

The Governor's Foundation for Health and Wellness is a non-profit corporation dedicated to enabling and encouraging Tennesseans to lead healthier lives. Based in Nashville, the Foundation brings together a statewide coalition of employers, health insurers, hospital systems, local governments, school systems and healthcare-focused foundations and community organizations to effect positive, measurable change. The Foundation's Healthier Tennessee initiative strives to increase the number of Tennesseans who are physically active for at least 30 minutes five times a week, promote a healthy diet, and reduce the number of people who use tobacco.

Tennesseans can visit www.healthiertn.com to learn more about the Healthier Tennessee movement.

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