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Dec 6, 2007 2:02 PM (18 hrs ago) By [STEVEN K. PAULSON](#), AP

DENVER ([Map](#), [News](#)) - Just in time for the holidays, [Gov. Bill Ritter](#) is calling on Coloradans to fight the fat and get some exercise, with help from a \$16 million grant from the [Kaiser Permanente](#) health-care group.

"Obesity has become an epidemic in the country and the state," Ritter said Thursday.

The grant will promote LiveWell Colorado, a program that encourages exercise and healthy eating.

LiveWell Colorado plans to educate the public on healthy lifestyle habits, improved pedestrian safety to promote exercise, improved health care and other programs that state officials hope will help Coloradans reduce their fat.

LiveWell Colorado is sponsored by the [Colorado Health Foundation](#), the state Department of Public Health and Environment and Kaiser Permanente.

[Lt. Gov. Barbara O'Brien](#) said 37 percent of [Colorado](#) adults are considered overweight and 18 percent are considered obese. She said a quarter of school children are overweight to obese, a trend medical officials find alarming.

O'Brien said many obese people are at risk for heart disease, diabetes, cancer, hypertension and asthma.

Colorado's chief medical officer, [Ned Colange](#), said he doesn't want to be a Grinch but residents need to cut back fat intake during the holidays and focus on moderation.

He said about 6,000 Coloradans die each year because of complications from being overweight.

Colange said people also need exercise. He said halftime was invented so people could take a walk.

"Increase your activity and you can get through the holidays all right," he said.

In August, the [Trust for America's Health](#) ranked Colorado as the leanest state in the nation, but health officials said at the time the numbers could be misleading because a majority of the state's residents are overweight or obese.

On the Net: <http://www.livewellcolorado.com/>