

2007 Report on Health Status State-by-State

How healthy is your state? Check your state's health ranking on a variety of health status indicators in the 2007 edition of *America's Health Rankings: A Call to Action for People and Their Communities*. The report, 18th in the series that began in 1990, documents the changes in the health status of each state over the years and is based on the idea that healthiness is a composite of four essential and controllable elements (health determinants): personal behaviors, decisions made by communities and policymakers, the community environment and the quality of clinical care.

Components of health status are a combination of "health determinants" and "health outcomes" such as smoking, lack of health insurance, obesity, infant mortality and premature death. The report includes snapshots of each state's health status, identifying their successes and challenges.

This year's report shows that the overall health of the US population declined by 0.3 percent from last year. This is a significant drop from the 0.3 percent average annual improvement since 2000 and the 1.5 percent average annual improvement in the 1990's. According to the report, the nation's overall health improvement has been in stagnation since 2000. Key reasons given for this stagnation are obesity, increases in the percentage of uninsured (up .5 percent from last year to 47 million), the persistence of tobacco use, violent crime, and children in poverty. The report states that obesity, up from 11.6 percent of the population in 1990 to more than 25 percent today, is "a precursor to many other diseases and plays a role in hindering the nation's ability to improve its overall health status."

Successes stem from improvements in the reduction in the rate of cancer and cardiovascular deaths, infectious disease, smoking, infant mortality, and violent crimes. A slight decrease in the number of children living in poverty and an increase in the number of ninth graders graduating high school within four years were also identified as positive contributions to the nation's overall health.

According to the report, 43 countries including Japan, Sweden, France, and Canada have higher life expectancies than the United States and 40 countries have lower infant mortality rate than the United States. Obesity, prevalence of major chronic diseases among adults age 50 and older, and infant mortality rates were identified as factors in the U.S. low health ranking in comparison to other nations.

Vermont tops the list of healthiest states this year while Mississippi is ranked 50th on the list as the least healthy state. South Carolina has the highest overall improvement with a 6.3 percent increase followed by Montana, Maryland, and New Mexico.

This report provides good data to show how the use of a patient-centered medical home (PCMH) can improve the health of people's lives. A PCMH program, like the one advocated by the College, is a way to reduce the prevalence of chronic disease such as

obesity, diabetes, and heart disease and improve the health of the nation by emphasizing prevention, coordinating care, and quality.

To read the entire report, please visit the United Health Foundation's Web site at: <http://www.unitedhealthfoundation.org/ahr2007/index.html> for a state-by state snapshot or to view the entire report.

If you have any questions on these or other topics, please contact Shuan Tomlinson at 800-338-2746 ext. 4547 or by email at stomlinson@acponline.org.

To access recent and past state health policy reports go to the State Health Policy section on the Chapter Leadership Network (CLN) website or click on: http://www.acponline.org/cln/health_policy.htm.

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