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Celebrate National Public Health Week April 1-7
Public Health is ROI: Save Money. Save Lives.

2013 County Health Rankings Detail Health Disparities in the Healthiest State

BENNINGTON – Vermont has been ranked #1 healthiest in *America’s Health Rankings* for many years in a row. But Vermonters are not equally healthy, as reported in the latest *County Health Rankings* by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Now available at www.countyhealthrankings.org, the 2013 report ranks Chittenden County as the healthiest in the state, and Essex and Orleans Counties as least healthy. The rankings are based on health outcomes – length of life and quality of life – and health factors such as smoking, alcohol use, physical activity, access to quality health care, income, education, employment and the built environment.

“We all want to live a healthy life.” said Chris Bongartz, director for the Bennington district office of the Health Department. “What we learn from the rankings is that there is not one single factor that makes us less healthy. Rather our health is impacted by a variety of factors, such as tobacco use, lack of access to healthy foods or physical inactivity.”

This fall, the Health Department will offer a free community education lunch time series exploring current health topics followed by a short guided walk.

“The health talk series is just one of many actions being taken to improve the health of the people in our community,” Bongartz said.

“Public Health is a collaborative effort; we can’t do this work in isolation. Developing relationships with community partners makes us better able to plan and implement new community initiatives.”

Among the findings in the 2013 *County Health Rankings*:

- 13% of adults in Bennington County report poor or fair health, compared to 8% of adults in Chittenden County.

- 19% of adults in Bennington County smoke, compared to 12% in Chittenden County.
- 21% of adults in Bennington County report they are physically inactive, compared to 15% in Chittenden County.
- 4% report limited access to healthy foods in Bennington County, compared to 4% in Chittenden County.

The *County Health Rankings* rank the overall health of nearly every county in all 50 states. Nationally, the data revealed that unhealthy counties have more than twice the rate of premature deaths than healthy ones and childhood poverty rates are twice as high in unhealthy counties. The *Rankings* allow counties to see how they compare to other counties within the state based on a range of factors that influence health.

Celebrate Health during National Public Health Week

During National Public Health Week April 1-7, the Vermont Department of Health will highlight the daily work of public health, and will launch *Healthy Vermonters 2020* – The state health assessment that documents the health status of Vermonters at the start of the decade, and sets the goals that will guide the work of public health through 2020.

During National Public Health Week thank you notes will go out to our Bennington County partners in support of public health efforts that create healthy opportunities for all. Look for our op-ed piece on Public Health in action in our local newspapers. Visit our office to see a display on “A Day in Your Life with Public Health.

For health news, information and alerts, visit www.healthvermont.gov, follow us on Twitter twitter.com/healthvermont, and join us on Facebook/[Bennington district office](https://www.facebook.com/Bennington-district-office) at: 324 Main Street, Bennington, VT 05201

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