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## Dodge County has good and bad in health rankings

*By The Associated Press and Citizen Staff*

Southeast Wisconsin is home to some of the state's healthiest — and least healthy — people, according to a University of Wisconsin-Madison study released today.

It showed that Milwaukee is one of the unhealthiest places to live in Wisconsin, while suburban Ozaukee and Waukesha counties are among the healthiest. Dodge County's health ranks right in the middle, 38th out of 72 counties.

Among the negatives Dodge County ranks:

n 68th in inpatient care

n 67th in obesity

n 66th in households tested for radon

n 64th in sexually transmitted diseases

n 62nd in lead poisoned children

n 59th in housing with lead risk

n 51st in percentage of adults without a high school diploma

On the positive side, the county ranks:

n 9th best in percentage of children in poverty

n 9th best in nitrates in water

n 14th best in the percentage of divorce

n 15th best in violent crime

n 18th best in the motor vehicle crash rate

According to a release from study doctors, the statistics show that Dodge County ranks in the top half of all counties in socioeconomic factors and physical environment, but ranks less well in health care and health behaviors.

The study calls "attention to the fact we have health discrepancies in Wisconsin," said Pat Remington, director of UW Population Health Institute. "It is a challenge for the entire state to think about what we might call the unequal distribution of health across the state and what approaches the entire state might do to provide resources and support for communities who need it the most."

A healthy county is one where people live to be 75 and older, their health is generally good and their quality of life is high, Remington said in a telephone interview from Madison.

The sixth annual study ranked Wisconsin's counties based on 30 factors including mortality rates, surveys of people about how they felt, the availability of health care, whether people smoked or were obese, binge drinking, level of education, exercise and living in housing with an increased lead risk.

Along with Ozaukee and Waukesha counties, Dane County, home to Madison and state government, ranked as the healthiest.

Menominee County, home of the Menominee Tribe in northeast Wisconsin, was once again the least healthiest, followed by the city of Milwaukee and Marquette County in central Wisconsin.

The study found 7.5 percent of the state's population under age 65 did not have health insurance. In Dodge County 6.6 percent of people under 65 did not have health insurance.

"The general sense is the number is increasing," Remington said. "People without health insurance have more diseases. Cancers are detected later, and people have an increased chance of dying. It is certainly not acceptable to have that many people uninsured."

The study also found wealthier counties tended to be healthier, which was no surprise, Remington said. People with education and money are more likely to have healthy behaviors, good health care and better overall health, he said.

In surveys, only 7.8 percent of people in Ozaukee County and 8.6 percent in Waukesha County rated themselves in fair or poor health, compared with 26.6 percent in Menominee County, 19.6 percent in Marquette County and 19.3 percent in the city of Milwaukee, the study found. Among Dodge County residents, 13.6 percent reported themselves in fair or poor health.

The state's five leading causes of death are cancer, heart disease and stroke, respiratory diseases, unintentional motor vehicle accidents and suicide, according to the study.

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On the Net:

2008 Wisconsin County Health Rankings: [http://www.pophealth.wisc.edu/uwphi/research/rankings\\_2008/rankings\\_2008.htm](http://www.pophealth.wisc.edu/uwphi/research/rankings_2008/rankings_2008.htm)