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# 2008 Wisconsin County Health Rankings Released: Kenosha County faces challenges to its health



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Madison – Ozaukee County is the healthiest county in the state, according to the newly released 2008 Wisconsin County Health Rankings. Kenosha County faces challenges to its health according to a study released by the University of Wisconsin today. This report is the sixth annual “health check-up” of the 72 counties and the City of Milwaukee, developed by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. According to the Institute’s director, Dr. Patrick Remington, “We bring together over 30 measures of health to summarize the overall health of each county in Wisconsin.”

The report revealed significant differences between the healthiest places (Ozaukee, Waukesha, Dane, Iowa, and Eau Claire counties) and the least healthy places (Menominee County, Milwaukee City, Marquette, Juneau, and Forest counties). “The health of a community is determined by a number of factors, such as health insurance, smoking rates, high school graduation, and air quality,” noted Dr. Remington.

The 12-page report used two factors to measure the level of overall health or “health outcomes” by county: the rate of premature death (dying before age 75) and the percent of people who report being in fair or poor health. The report then analyzes several factors in four major categories that can affect a community’s health: health care, health behaviors, social and economic factors, and the physical environment. Kenosha County ranked low in health outcomes (61) and health determinants (62). These ranks are similar to those in 2007. Kenosha County’s best ranking was in health care (41). The county ranked 55th in health behaviors and 60th in both socioeconomic factors and the physical environment.

“The Institute’s annual health ranking is an important tool for communities to begin to assess and improve their health,” said Robert Golden, MD, Dean of the UW School of Medicine and Public Health. “These reports can be used as a call to action,” Golden said. “While access to high quality health care is key to improving health, we must work together to improve health-related behaviors, to increase the level of education and income for our most vulnerable citizens, and to improve the social and physical environment within Wisconsin.”

The report and “snapshots” of each county are available at [http://www.pophealth.wisc.edu/UWPHI/research/rankings\\_2008/rankings\\_2008.htm](http://www.pophealth.wisc.edu/UWPHI/research/rankings_2008/rankings_2008.htm).

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