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## Health habits two-sided in Brown County

Smoking, drinking rates down but obesity has risen

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Brown County residents are living longer but aren't necessarily following healthful living standards.

That's according to a study by the University of Wisconsin's Population Health Institute.

The county came in 17th among the 72 Wisconsin counties for its level of health care and 23rd in the two health outcomes — the rate of premature death and the percentage of people who report being in fair or poor health.

But Brown County ranks 45th in things such as health behaviors, socio-economic factors and physical environment.

Some of the news is good.

Compared with a similar study that covered 2000-2006, county residents are improving in some key health areas. For example, cigarette smoking has dropped from 24 percent to 21.5 percent and binge drinking has fallen from 29 percent to 27.8 percent.

"We've really been working hard on the smoking issue," said Judy Friederichs, the county's health department director. "More people are getting the message."

Other news is not as good. The obesity rate has increased from 21 percent to 23.8 percent, and the study revealed that 78.3 percent of the residents are not eating enough fruits and vegetables.

"Obesity is really a big issue in the state," said Friederichs, noting the connection to the poor amount of fruit and vegetable consumption. "It's so multi-faceted. There are many partners in the community working on this problem but there needs to be more education."

The high school non-completion rate has gone from 13.3 percent to 14.7 percent, unemployment has inched up from 4.6 percent to 4.7 percent and the percentage of children living in poverty has swelled from 8.2 percent in 2000 to 11.9 percent this year.

"I think our community has excellent health care but there are a lot of access issues for people," Friederichs said. "We have some big gaps between the haves and the have-nots."

## Additional Facts

Anti-smoking event

Visitors at Aurora BayCare will create origami cranes today in honor of the Great American Smokeout. The goal is to create 1,200 origami paper cranes to represent the 1,200 Americans who die from tobacco use and secondhand smoke every day.

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