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State gets mixed grades in health survey

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By Krista B. Ledbetter
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Wisconsin has some work to do.

Although the state received an overall B- on a recent health report card, a report developed by the University of Wisconsin

Population Health Institute showed Wisconsin is nearly failing in the area of disparities in health care for poor and less educated residents, one of the study's authors said.

Patrick Remington, a physician with the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, said B- is a pretty good grade, but not where the state wants to be.

"Our goal is to become the healthiest state in the nation, but we have some margin for improvement," Remington said. "We're doing pretty well, but the only way Wisconsin is going to become healthier is if every group in the state shares the prosperity and advances in health and health care."

According to the report, people with less education, people living in the inner city or rural areas and minorities are receiving failing grades in health.

"The disparities we see right now are unacceptable," Remington said. "If you have populations with poor health, you're never going to achieve the overall goal."

Remington said Wisconsin has a goal of improving health and eliminating disparities by the year 2010, which he knows will be difficult.

"Currently in Wisconsin, we've failed to provide equal health care for all," he said.

Lori Guenther, of Care Management and Quality Improvement at Aurora Medical Center, said a B- isn't bad, but there are plenty of ways that Wisconsinites can raise the grade.

"Obesity is a huge problem here, which it is all over the country," Guenther said. "And

A summary of grades

- Infants: C
- Children through young adult (1-24): B
- Working age adults (25-64): B
- Older adults (65+): C
- Overall: B-
- To see the report for yourself, log on to www.pophealth.wisc.edu/UWPHI

smoking, of course."

And her advice to take a positive step in a healthier direction? Lace up your tennis shoes.

"Start walking," she said. "And watch what you eat and your portion control."

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