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### **Washington among Wisconsin's Healthiest Counties**

*County Health Rankings provide nationwide snapshot of varying health*

Washington County residents are among the healthiest in the state, according to the *2013 County Health Rankings* released today by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). This is the tenth release of *County Health Rankings* in Wisconsin by UWPHI. *County Health Rankings* examine the health and well-being of people living in nearly every county in every state across the nation and show that how long and well people live depends on multiple factors beyond just their access to medical care.

Wisconsin's five healthiest counties are Ozaukee, Kewaunee, St. Croix, Pierce, and Door. The five counties in the poorest health are Menominee, Milwaukee, Marquette, Adams, and Forest. The least healthy counties are primarily located in rural areas of central and northern Wisconsin with the exception of Milwaukee County, the state's most urban county, in the southeast. "The *Rankings* tell us that we all have a stake in creating a healthier community and no single sector alone can tackle the health challenges in any given community," said Dr. Patrick Remington, professor and associate dean at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. "Collaboration is critical. The *Rankings* are sparking action throughout Wisconsin as people from all sectors join forces to create new possibilities in health—county by county."

Washington County ranks in the top quartile for health outcomes (10) and health factors (5). Washington County ranks in the top half of Wisconsin counties for physical environment (23) and in the top quartile for health behaviors (13), clinical care (9) and social and economic factors (6). "The health outcome rankings represent today's health and the health factor rankings represent tomorrow's health," said Linda Walter, Washington County health officer. "Where you live does matter to your health, and improving health is everyone's business."

The *Rankings*, available at [www.countyhealthrankings.org](http://www.countyhealthrankings.org), include a snapshot of each county in Wisconsin. UWPHI researchers used five measures to assess the level of overall health for each county: premature death, the percent of people who report being in fair or poor health, the number of days people report being in poor physical and poor mental health, and the rate of low birthweight infants. The *Rankings* also examine 25 factors that influence health, including rates of childhood poverty, rates of smoking, obesity levels, teen birth rates, access to physicians and dentists, rates of high school graduation and college attendance, access to healthy foods, levels of physical inactivity, and percentages of children living in single parent households. This

year's *Rankings* include two new measures: access to dentists and drinking water safety. "The *County Health Rankings* can be put to use right away by leaders in government, businesses, health care, and every citizen, motivated to work together to create a culture of health in their community," said Dr. Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, RWJF president and CEO. "The *Rankings* are driving innovation, unleashing creativity and inspiring big changes to improve health in communities large and small throughout the country."

"The Healthy People Project of Washington County (HPP) is a great example of the community taking action to improve the overall health of Washington County residents," said Linda Walter, Washington County health officer. "HPP has partnered with the Washington County Breastfeeding Coalition, the Injury Prevention Coalition of Washington County, health care providers, businesses, childcare centers, school districts, and park and recreation departments throughout the county to promote staying active and eating better, with the goal of improving the forecast for tomorrow's health."

The *Rankings* are one facet of the *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps* program. The *Roadmaps* project supports communities working to improve health. RWJF recently awarded six communities the *RWJF Roadmaps to Health Prize* for their trailblazing strategies to create a culture of health. The call for applications for the 2014 *RWJF Roadmaps to Health Prize* is being released today. For more information about the *Rankings*, the *Prize*, and the *Roadmaps to Health* Action Center that offers access to free personalized assistance to places that need guidance on what steps to take to make their communities healthier places to live, learn, work and play, please visit [www.countyhealthrankings.org](http://www.countyhealthrankings.org).

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