

Press Release for Immediate Use
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Public Health is ROI
Save Lives, Save Money
National Public Health Week
April 1–7, 2013 • www.nphw.org

Public Health is a positive return on investment. The theme of national public health week this year points out that when we invest in prevention strategies and health programs, we save lives and money. It is impossible to disconnect our individual health from our community's health. When it comes to good health, a rising tide lifts all boats.

Resilient, well-supported public health systems are critical to our health and future. They maintain the health victories we have accomplished so far and are essential to confronting today's big problems such as rising chronic disease rates. We also need public health to monitor and protect us from emerging health threats, keep vaccine-preventable diseases at bay and much more.

www.nphw.org uses the following 5 public health themes to demonstrate ROI:

- Ensuring a safe, healthy home for your family
- Providing a safe environment for children at school
- Creating a healthy workplace
- Protecting you while you're on the move
- Empowering a healthy community

An example of a local effort under the theme: *protecting you while you're on the move* is occurring currently at UWWC and the West Bend High Schools. The Washington County Injury Prevention Coalition of which the Washington County Health Department is a supporting member is conducting a seat belt use survey. During March, April and May vehicles are being observed to tally how many occupants are wearing seat belts and later providing students with safety information about distracted driving. The act of using a seat belt is one of the most recognizable public health victories. From 1981 to 2010, seat belt use rose from 11% to about 85%, saving hundreds of thousands of lives.

But public health's prevention work is never done; reinforcement of the need for seat belts especially with newer distractions like texting or talking on cell phones makes protecting ourselves while on the move ever important. Did you know that more than 15 people are killed every day in the U.S. and more than 1,200 are injured in crashes involving a distracted driver? Motor vehicle-related injuries are the leading cause of death among U.S. children. Child safety seats reduce the risk of death by 71% for infants and by 54% for children ages 1 to 4 years old. If you would like a child safety seat demonstration and instructions on how to install a specific seat call the Washington County Health Department at 262-335-4462 for an appointment.

Public health teaches us to start small and think big so always buckle your seat belt no matter how short the trip and don't be shy about reminding others to do the same. Then the next time you have contact with a policymaker tell them about the return on investment of simple preventative measures, such as seat belts. Evidence shows that up to \$11.80 in benefits can be gained for every \$1 invested in bicycling and walking opportunities and that states with the highest level of biking and walking also have the lowest levels of costly chronic disease, such as high blood pressure, obesity and diabetes. Public Health is a positive return on investment.

For more information about the Washington County Injury Prevention Coalition or other public health services visit the Washington County Health Department website at www.co.washington.wi.us/chn.