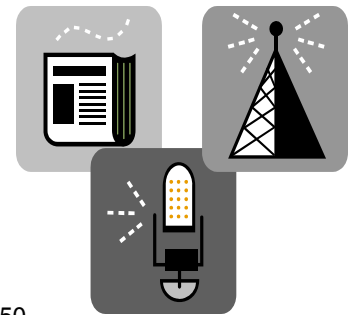




# NEWS

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## McLean County Residents Making Positive Health Changes

BLOOMINGTON-McLean County has made steps toward positive health changes in the past two years, according to the most recent behavioral risk factor survey of residents.

Among the notable changes, the number of people who identify themselves as smokers dropped roughly five percent, from almost 21 percent in 2006 to just over 16 percent in 2008. Approximately 64 percent of people also now consider themselves nonsmokers, up from 59 percent in 2006.

It appears that residents' attitudes towards smoking have changed as well. In 2006 close to 57 percent of people indicated that smoking should not be allowed in restaurants at all. Today, 84 percent of residents believe that smoking should be prohibited in restaurants. Nearly 79 percent of people now do not allow smoking anywhere inside their homes, up from nearly 71 percent in 2006.

"This shows a profound positive movement in community behavior and attitudes regarding smoking," said McLean County Health Department Director Bob Keller. "Cigarette smoking is one of the most prominent risk factors associated with heart disease, cancer and stroke, McLean County's three leading causes of death. We are making progress toward meeting the CDC Healthy People 2010 goal of no more than 12 percent of the population smoking," said Keller.

The number of people that indicated they had been screened for colon cancer has risen as well. About 60 percent of people ages 50 and up had been screened when asked in 2006 and now over 65 percent indicate they have been screened.

Flu shots seem to be increasingly common also. Over 37 percent of people have had a flu shot in the past 12 months, compared to the 29.5 percent that had one in 2006.

More people are also accessing healthcare services. Over 96 percent indicated that they have healthcare coverage, compared to 90 percent in 2006. Over 86 percent have a regular health care provider compared to 82 percent in 2006. Only about 4 percent said they could not see a doctor in the past 12 months due to cost, compared to 9.5 percent in 2006.

These highlights indicate positive trends in McLean County that will help move its health status towards the Healthy People 2010 goals. They also indicate that some local and statewide efforts seem to be working in changing behavior and attitudes. Perhaps the biggest example of this is the local smoke-free ordinances and the Smoke-Free Illinois Act that have been passed in the last two years and their impact on smoking behaviors and attitudes.

The behavioral risk factor survey is a county-specific telephone survey overseen by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and conducted by Northern Illinois University. This survey was completed in 1997, 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008. The survey asks respondents questions about alcohol use, arthritis, asthma, cardiovascular disease, colorectal cancer, demographics, diabetes, nutrition, health care utilization, HIV and other STDs, immunizations, injury control, oral health, osteoporosis screening, physical activity, prostate cancer screening, quality of life, tobacco use, weight control and women's health.

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