

COMPASS

The Picture of Health



A progress report on the well-being of a dynamic community

by rhea maze

The results are in. Every three years, the Health District carries out the Community Health Survey, one of the largest, most comprehensive community-level surveys of its kind. The information gathered is used to assess the health status and health-care needs of Health District residents

and paints an intriguing picture of what's going well, what could be better, and what might be done differently in the future to improve our community's health...

Thank you for your participation!

The 2013 survey asked participants 83 questions over 16 pages and 2,819 adults in Larimer County returned completed surveys (1,774 from within the Health District's service area).

Looking Good!

▶ The number of people who smoke cigarettes has dropped by half—from 18 percent in 1995 to just 9 percent in 2013. The percentage of those who have never smoked increased from 67 percent in 2010 to 71 percent in 2013. Only 4 percent of all respondents allow smoking in their homes, and only 11

percent allow smoking in their vehicles. While tobacco use and exposure

continues to decline, there's more work to be done. The tobacco treatment specialists at the Health District's Step Free from Tobacco program are on the case and have already helped hundreds of local smokers quit.

▶ Putting your seat belt on is the single most effective way to prevent injuries and deaths on the road. In the 2013 survey, 88 percent of survey respondents reported always wearing a seat belt. That's up from 77 percent in 2007 and 67 percent in 1995.

▶ People seem to be feeling better and more are accessing preventive health services. More than nine in 10 respondents rated their health as good, very good or excellent. Sixty-seven percent of respondents reported getting routine annual check-ups—up from 59 percent in 2010. Those who self-reported getting sufficient exercise remained the same from 2010 to 2013 at 66 percent.

▶ We're seeing brighter smiles in most aspects of oral care. More people are getting annual dental exams (71 percent in 2013 compared to 68 percent in 2010), fewer people are saying they put off taking their

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| | SPECIAL PULL-OUT Health Insurance Help | | | | |

child to the dentist because of cost (12 percent in 2013 compared to 19 percent in 2007), and instances of self-reported toothache and gum problems are on the decline (17 percent in 2013 compared to 21 percent in 2010).

► More people are staying covered. The number of respondents who reported experiencing gaps in health coverage decreased and those who reported that they were never without health coverage rose to 79 percent in 2013, up from 75 percent in 2010.

Room to Grow...

► The concerning trend towards obesity has continued to worsen over the past few years. More people are overweight and the proportion of the population with an obese body mass index has nearly doubled, from 9 percent in 1995 to 16 percent in 2013. Interestingly, after steadily trending upward from 2004 to 2010, this year's survey saw a drop in the amount of fruits and vegetables respondents reported eating on a daily basis.

► Local rates of binge drinking continue to rank considerably higher than the rest of the state and country. Survey results showed binge drinking occurring with approximately one-quarter of respondents, compared to the national average of 17 percent. However, we've continued to see the number of people who admit to driving after having two or more drinks steadily decrease over the years.

► The cost of health care continues to be a problem, forcing many people to delay or skip medical care and causing them to worry about being able to afford health services in the future. Fifty-nine percent of respondents were very or somewhat worried they wouldn't be able to afford health insurance and 44 percent worried about affording medical care. As in past years, those with lower incomes or without health insurance were more likely to report having poorer health and more difficulty accessing care.

► Health insurance coverage helps people get into the health care system. Of those with insurance, nearly three-quarters of respondents reported that they have a particular doctor or nurse who they consider to be their regular care provider. However, for adults without health insurance, only 32 percent reported having a regular health-care provider. An alarming 12 percent of respondents reported being uninsured.

Over to You

While the Community Health Survey continues to help guide the work of the Health District and provides valuable information for other local and statewide agencies, the survey also aims to understand the community's most pressing health concerns.

Respondents from all of Larimer County were invited to weigh in on open-ended questions about what they thought the greatest local health issues were and offered suggestions for what the Health District should do

to address them. The most frequently-mentioned health topics and concerns respondents wrote about in the 3,200 returned comments included:

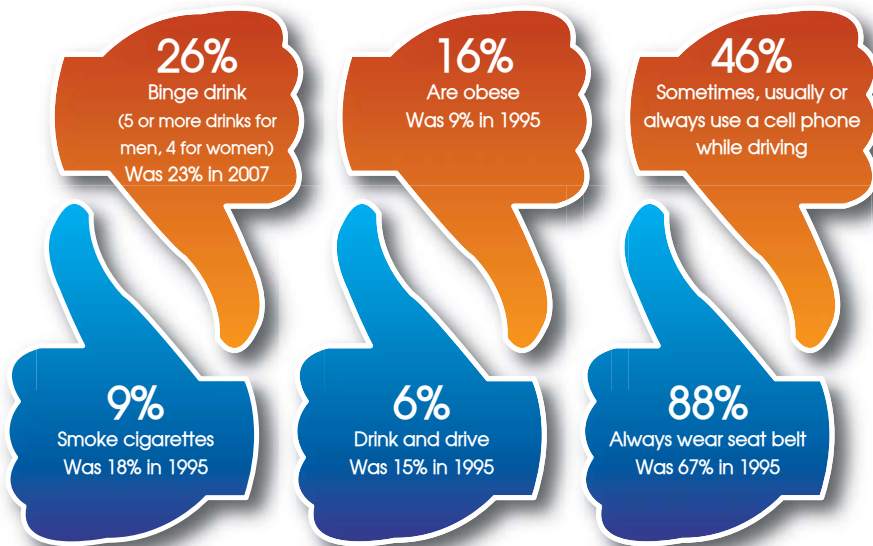
- Health insurance concerns and understanding the Affordable Care Act
- The struggle to afford quality health care
- The potential health and environmental risks of fracking
- Substance abuse
- Immunizations and flu shot information
- The rise and prevalence of obesity, especially in children
- The lack of mental health resources

Stay Tuned

In addition to monitoring trends that have showed a consistent pattern since the survey's inception in 1995, the 2013 survey expanded in scope to include questions about how new events and emerging health issues are impacting the community. Topics added to the 2013 survey for the first time included questions on marijuana use and local retail marijuana policies, West Nile virus and local mosquito spraying policies, e-cigarette use and distracted driving. This information is available to help policy makers better understand our community.

In an effort to make even more

exciting inroads into greater community health insight, the Health District recently launched its first-ever Child Health Survey, sponsored by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. The survey's goal is to obtain better data on children's overall health and well-being and will gather information about children under the age of 14. This new survey will help fill a gap with regards to local data on child health and the results are set to be analyzed this fall. ✨



Sound scientific sampling techniques are used to randomly select survey participants and obtain a diverse set of respondents. While the Health District encompasses the northern two-thirds of Larimer County (and includes Fort Collins, Timnath, Laporte, Wellington, Bellvue, Livermore, and Virginia Dale as well as the mountain communities of Stove Prairie, Poudre Park, Rustic and Red Feather Lakes), the Larimer County Department of Health and Environment and the North Colorado Health Alliance joined with the Health District to make it possible for the 2013 Community Health Survey to include all of Larimer County. For more information, visit healthdistrict.org/community-health-survey or contact Sue Hewitt at the Health District at (970) 224-5209 or shewitt@healthdistrict.org.

• connections •

..... here for you

by rhea maze

Have you ever wondered what it means if a friend says they can't remember the last time they experienced joy? Or if your partner had a drinking problem or your child's behavior was normal? Maybe you've entertained the thought of reaching out for help but didn't know where to turn or if you could afford it?

At one time or another, everyone could use a little help weathering life's storms. Whether you or someone you know might be struggling with mental health or substance abuse issues, experiencing a trying life change, or simply feeling under stress and in need of tips and tricks for coping, Connections is your local resource for taking the first step toward a solution.

"Anyone who's even thinking about seeking help should give us a call," says program manager Dee Colombini. Connections links people in the community to the resources they need, helps them navigate their options and provides ongoing support along the way. "We're client-centered and client-driven. We discuss what your needs are and get you connected."

Folks of all ages and backgrounds who call or walk in are immediately connected with a mental health professional and provided with comprehensive information and customized options. Connections staff are dually trained to provide mental health and substance abuse resources and support. They can help you find

providers covered by your insurance plan, connect you with their network of mental health professionals (including low cost and sliding fee scale providers) and provide your family members with education and resources. They can also help people sign up for Social Security, food stamps and Medicaid.

Through fires, floods, tornados and other disasters and emergencies, Connections maintains a strong local presence and works hand-in-hand with the Red Cross to provide disaster behavioral health response and crisis counseling. Their various other collaborations include work with the Northern Colorado AIDS Project, Poudre School District and the Larimer County Jail.

The team works hard to continuously address ongoing community needs. "We have many therapists in the community, but the lack of psychiatrists is a huge problem," Colombini says. In response, Connections has piloted a psychiatric medications group which allows people to access and start the medications they need. They also offer a weekly therapy group that teaches participants how to understand and regulate their emotions.

Life can get messy, and Connections helps people understand and access support options they may not have known existed before. "That's what we're all about," Colombini says. "A lot of people in the community don't know about this resource or think it applies to them—but we can help." ✨

"We often hear clients say, 'I didn't think I would ever want or need counseling, but this has been very helpful and I'm so glad you're here.'"
—Dee Colombini, Connections program manager



Connections, a partnership between the Health District of Northern Larimer County and Touchstone Health Partners, was formed in 2002 and works to connect members of the community with affordable mental health and substance abuse care.

• connections •

(970)221-5551

525 W. Oak St.
(inside the Touchstone Health Partners building)

Open Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
(Walk-ins accepted 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.)
Phone help available 24/7
All services are strictly confidential