



WASHTENAW COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

...focused on prevention

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Washtenaw County Public Health Promotes Complete Streets Policies to Increase Physical Activity and Improve Health

Information submitted by:

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Issue: Citizens in all regions of Washtenaw County report low levels of physical activity. Sedentary lifestyles are strongly associated with the leading causes of early death and disability. A community's transportation network either facilitates or discourages physical activity.

- In 2005, 65% of Washtenaw County adults did not get adequate amounts of regular physical activity as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Every year since 1995, the rate of those not getting enough activity increased by more than 1% (Washtenaw County Public Health, 2005).
- The average number of 'short walking or biking trips' taken each week in 2005 for Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti residents was about 2.5, while Chelsea, Dexter and Manchester areas report taking just .5 per week (WCPH 2005). 'Short trips' are one indicator for 'community walkability'.
- Over 50% of Washtenaw County adults are either overweight or obese (WCPH 2005). By 2048, if trends continue, 100% of all Americans, including children, will be overweight or obese (Obesity Research Journal, 2008).
- Obesity, heart disease, stroke, and diabetes are leading causes of death yet can be positively influenced by regular physical activity. Between 1995 and 2005, obesity rates increased 5% for a county-wide rate of 18%. Michigan ranks as the 9th 'fattest state' in the nation for adults (Trust for America's Health, 2009).
- Treating disease exacerbated by inactivity costs more than any other type of health care (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2009). For every dollar invested in community programs to increase physical activity, improve nutrition, and prevent smoking, \$5.60 is gained.

State and local policies can effectively facilitate physical activity in Washtenaw County and across Michigan.

Examples include:

- Transportation policies that ensure facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists are included when roads projects are designed and built (State Complete Streets policy)
- Community design and land use planning policies that require sidewalks, bike paths, traffic-calming measures, and non-motorized paths connect destinations to neighborhoods.
- Zoning for mix-used development so that communities are designed to promote walkability and bikeability.

Definitions

Overweight: Body Mass Index (BMI) of 25 - 29.9

Obese: BMI score > 30

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