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Lafayette County Health Department

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Public Health

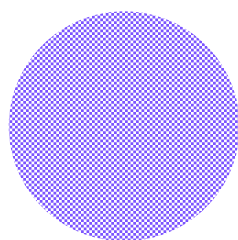
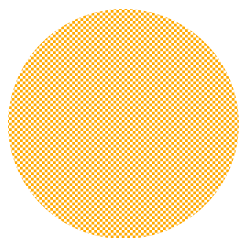
Debbie Siegenthaler, RN, MSN Director

HOW HEALTHY IS LAFAYETTE COUNTY?

There are big differences in the health of Wisconsin communities. Each year the Wisconsin Public Health and Health Policy Institute release a report called the Wisconsin County Health Rankings. This is a “health check-up” of the 72 counties by UW Medical School faculty and staff. The report looks at the health status of each county. To measure the current health of counties the rankings are based on two major areas: the rate of premature death (before the age of 75) and how people assess their own health. The rankings also consider factors that contribute to health: socio-economic factors such as education and poverty; health behavior such as smoking, binge drinking and overweight; and health care such as health insurance and the physical environment such as air quality.

Lafayette County was ranked 21st overall in health outcomes for 2004 (compared to a 2003 ranking of 41st overall). Counties with the highest health outcomes were (1) Ozaukee, (2) Waukesha, (3) Eau Claire, (4) St. Croix and (5) Portage. The counties with the lowest health outcomes were (68) Adams, (69) Burnett, (70) Juneau, (71) Forest and (72) Menominee. Milwaukee ranked 65th.

What we should take away from this health “report card” is that while we saw an overall improvement from 2003 in our county health outcome status (from 41st to 21st), we still have room for improvement. We hope we continue to see an upward trend in our overall county ranking. It is important to note that while Lafayette County improved, some counties with strong health outcomes declined. One can conclude that there is no room for complacency and that communities, like individuals are either moving forward and making progress or falling back; a community cannot stand still.



Simultaneous to the county health rankings, the Lafayette County Health Department completed a Health Needs Assessment in 2004. We definitely found some areas that need attention in our county. Notable health issues that emerged from the 2004 health needs assessment included: 1) lung cancer mortality rates 2) heart disease mortality rates 3) lack of oral health access 4) suicide rates 5) diabetes mortality rates, 6) suicide rates and 7) rates of uninsured individuals. All seven of which were higher than either, or both, the southern Wisconsin county regional, or statewide rates.

Since the needs were numerous and given the reality that the health department is limited by resource and staffing constraints, the Lafayette County Health Department prioritized the recommendations through a survey tool designed to gain the community's perceptions of needs and priorities. The table below provides the rank order of the top three priorities.

Rank order of priorities		
Recommendation are	Total # in the top three priorities	% of areas prioritized
Elderly health needs	133	31.4%
Healthy lifestyle promotion	128	30.3%
Improve access to care	75	17.7%
Environmental health	66	15.6%
Suicide Prevention	37	8.7%

Based on the data collected the top three priority areas identified by the community include:

- 1) Health needs of the elderly
- 2) Healthy lifestyle promotion
- 3) Improving access to care

We are lucky in Lafayette County to have a county board and policy makers that are willing to invest in the public's health and enable our department to work on these priority issues. These are issues our Health Department and Board of Health will focus attention on in 2005. Our issues don't vary widely from the needs across the state and nation. In fact, they very much mirror initiatives set forth by the Federal and State Health Plans; *Healthy People 2010* and *Healthiest Wisconsin 2010*.

The Lafayette County Health Department has taken numerous steps to assure these issues are priorities in 2005. The Health Department continues to offer long-standing services as the monthly health days around the county offering various screenings and health services. The Health Department will also look at new ways to address these priority issues. One such step is involvement in a broad-based community planning group newly formed in 2004 called the *Lafayette County Aging Well Living Well Coalition*. The mission of the AWLW Coalition is: "Helping older adults and those who care for them thrive." The Coalition is developing plans to address the pertinent issues affecting all those who are aging in Lafayette County.

If you would like information on the AWLW Coalition, the health ranking report, the Lafayette County Health Needs Assessment report, or more information on services offered through the health department, please call Debbie Siegenthaler at the Lafayette County Health Department at 608-776-4895.



Home Care

Jane O'Brien, RN

What is Dementia?

The term “dementia” describes a group of symptoms that are caused by changes in brain function. Dementia symptoms may include asking the same questions repeatedly; become lost in familiar places; being unable to follow directions; getting disoriented about time, people, and places; and neglecting personal safety, hygiene, and nutrition. People with dementia lose their abilities at different rates.

Dementia is caused by many conditions. Some conditions that cause dementia can be reversed, and others cannot. The two most common forms of dementia in older people are Alzheimer’s disease and multi-infarct Dementia (sometimes called vascular dementia). These types of dementia are irreversible, which means they cannot be cured.

Reversible conditions with symptoms of dementia can be caused by a high fever, dehydration, vitamin deficiency and poor nutrition, bad reactions to medicines, problems with the thyroid gland, or a minor head injury. Medical conditions like these can be serious and should be treated by a doctor as soon as possible.

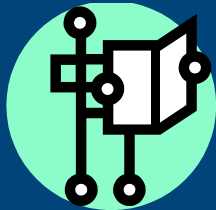
Sometimes older people have emotional problems that can be mistaken for dementia. Feeling sad, lonely, worried, or bored may be more common for older people facing retirement or coping with the death of a spouse, relative or friend. Adapting to these changes leaves some people feeling confused or forgetful. Emotional problems can be eased by supportive friends and family or by professional help from a doctor or counselor.

What is Alzheimer’s Disease (AD)?

Alzheimer’s disease (AD) is the most common form of dementia, a brain disorder that seriously affects a person’s ability to carry out daily activities among older people. It involves the parts of the brain that control thought, memory, and language. Every day scientists learn more but right now, the causes of AD are still unknown, and there is no cure. However, there is medicine to treat mild to moderate Alzheimer’s disease.

What is Multi-Infarct Dementia (MID)?

In multi-infarct dementia, a series of small strokes or changes in the brain’s blood supply may result in the death of brain tissue. The location in the brain where the small strokes occur determines the seriousness of the problem and the symptoms that arise. Symptoms that begin suddenly may be a sign of this kind of dementia. People with multi-infarct dementia are likely to show signs of improvement or remain stable for long periods of time, then quickly develop new symptoms if more strokes occur. In many people with multi-infarct dementia, high blood pressure is to blame. One of the most important reasons for controlling high blood pressure is to prevent strokes.



Hospice

Kristie Lueck RN, BSN

Grief Support Group Offered:

Losses through death, as well as other losses in life, can be easier to bear when experiences are shared with others. In order to assist area residents with loss, Lafayette County Hospice and Memorial Hospital of Lafayette County are offering a Grief Support Group. The group is open to the public and free of charge. Each session will consist of a short presentation about an aspect of the grief experience by the facilitators, followed by time for interaction by participants and refreshments.

The Grief Support Group will meet every Monday evening beginning April 4, through June 13, 2005 except Memorial Day, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. The location will be the meeting room in the lower level of the First Banking center, at the intersection of Highways 23 and 81 in Darlington. Parking outside the meeting room is accessible by driving around behind the building. Pre-registration is not necessary; anyone having questions may call Kristie Lueck, RN, at Lafayette County Hospice, at (608)776-4895.

LAFAYETTE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Phone: 608-776-4895

www.lafayettecountyhealthdepartment.org

2005 HEALTH DAY SCHEDULE

Argyle EMS Building	9:30 to 12 noon	Gratiot State Bank	9:30 to 10:30 am
Belmont Community Bldg.	10:30 to 12 noon	Shullsburg Senior Apt	9:30 to 12 noon
Benton Senior Apt.	8:30 to 10:00 am	South Wayne Sr. Apt.	9:30 to 10:30 am
Blanchardville Sr. Apt.	1:00 to 2:00 pm	Woodford State Bank	11:00 to 12 noon
Darlington Health Dept.	10:00 to 12 noon		

Monday, Feb 21 Benton/Belmont
Monday, Feb 28 South Wayne/Woodford

Monday, Mar 7 Shullsburg
Monday, Mar 14 Argyle
Monday, Mar 21 Benton/Belmont
Monday, Mar 28 Gratiot

Monday, April 4 Shullsburg
Friday, April 8 Darlington
Monday, April 11 Argyle/Blanch.
Monday, April 18 Benton/Belmont
Monday, April 25 South Wayne/
Woodford

