



Our Health

Examining Topics from 'Our Health is in Our Hands'

Men's Health: Risks and Realities in Ingham County

June is 'Men's Health' month. To celebrate we are devoting this issue of 'Our Health' to the health status of men in Ingham County. Discussion of men's health necessarily overlaps with topics addressed in previous newsletters: physical activity, hypertension, and chronic diseases. As noted in the February 2010 edition of 'Our Health', Capital Area men are more likely than women to participate in physical activities. However, men's overall health status and other health-related behaviors are cause for concern.



Overview: Men's Health

Both within the United States and internationally, men have a shorter life expectancy than women do, with higher rates of morbidity and mortality from cancer, diabetes, coronary heart disease, and hypertension. Results from the 2009 National Health Interview Survey suggest that in the United States 12% of men aged 18 years and older are in 'fair' or 'poor' health, only 37% regularly engage in leisure-time activity, and 23% currently smoke. Among men aged 20 years or more, 33% are obese and 31% have hypertension. Michigan figures are similar, except for obesity which is higher than national averages. The latest data from the Michigan Behavioral Risk Factor Survey (MBRFS 2010) show that men are more likely than women to lack health coverage, to have no personal health care provider, and not have had a checkup or a routine dental visit within the past year.

Men's Health in Our Community

Locally, the 2008-2010 Capital Area Behavioral Risk Factor & Social Capital Survey provides some positive news. Roughly 85% of Ingham County men rate their health as 'excellent', 'very good', or 'good', while 84% reported taking part in leisure-time physical activity (Table 1). Yet looking at overall health status, the trend is clear: Ingham County men are more likely to report 'fair' or 'poor' health than their in-state peers.

There are troubling health disparities visible among men within the state and in our county. Although the confidence intervals (CIs) of results for Ingham County non-Hispanic Black men are wide ($\pm 16.0\%$, versus $\pm 4.9\%$ for non-Hispanic white men and for all men combined) a significant proportion of non-Hispanic Black men report 'fair' or 'poor' health when compared with other groups. Black men in Ingham County had similar results for lack of health care coverage, with percentages higher than the state average.

In addition to poorer perceived overall health and health coverage, Black men in Ingham County were more likely to report lacking leisure-time physical activity. Of note, Black men were also less likely to smoke or be obese, positive findings (Table 1). Since only a small number of men in racial/ethnic categories other than non-Hispanic White and non-Hispanic Black responded to our survey, they would not provide reliable estimates for the community and we have not included those statistics.

Table 1. Comparison of Selected Results for Men from MBRFS 2010 and Capital Area BRFS&SC 2008-2010

	Michigan		Capital Area	
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI
Overall Health Status 'Fair' or 'Poor'	13.0%	11.7-14.5	14.9%	10.0-19.8
White non-Hispanic	10.5%	9.3-11.9	13.8%	8.9-18.7
Black non-Hispanic	25.3%	19.6-32.0	36.4%	20.4-52.4
No Health Care Coverage	18.7%	16.5-21.1	13.3%	8.4-18.2
White non-Hispanic	15.7%	13.6-18.1	12.0%	6.8-17.2
Black non-Hispanic	25.8%	19.2-33.6	31.1%	13.8-48.4
Colon Cancer Screening	67.0%	64.5-69.4	63.8%	58.6-68.9
White non-Hispanic	68.9%	66.4-71.4	64.7%	59.3-70.1
Black non-Hispanic	65.4%	57.2-72.7	54.3%	43.6-64.9
Current Smoker	21.0%	19.0-23.1	24.5%	17.6-31.4
White non-Hispanic	19.6%	17.6-21.8	29.7%	22.2-37.2
Black non-Hispanic	23.6%	17.9-30.4	23.7%	11.4-36.0
Former Smoker	27.7%	25.8-29.6	21.3%	16.3-26.4
No Leisure-Time Physical Activity	21.6%	19.7-23.5	15.6%	11.2-19.9
White non-Hispanic	21.1%	19.2-23.2	15.9%	12.0-19.8
Black non-Hispanic	24.5%	18.6-31.6	28.0%	13.1-42.9
Obese (BMI \geq 30)	31.4%	29.3-33.7	23.8%	18.1-29.6
White non-Hispanic	30.7%	28.4-33.1	25.5%	20.4-30.6
Black non-Hispanic	36.6%	29.9-43.8	21.3%	10.0-32.6
Overweight (BMI \geq 25)	40.9%	38.6-43.2	32.8%	25.1-40.4

*Note: colon cancer screening is among men over the age of 49 years in Michigan and among men over the age of 44 years among men in the Capital Area.

Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight is an important issue for local men. Even though our results are better than the state-wide averages, the majority of those surveyed were categorized as either overweight (32.8%) or obese (23.8%). Looking at the

confidence intervals (Table 1), in the best-case scenario (combining the lowest probable figures from the CIs) the percentage of men who are overweight or obese is around 43%. Excess weight negatively impacts men's long-term health, as weight is a significant factor in many chronic conditions, including high blood pressure and the development of diabetes.

Similarly, Ingham County statistics on smoking and colon cancer screening call for improvement. The majority of men surveyed

Table 2. Selected Capital Area BRFS&SC 2008-2010 Results Stratified by Education

	No HS Diploma		HS Graduate		Some College		College Graduate	
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	%	95% CI
Health Status Fair or Poor	11.7%	0-24.9	28.4%	15.9-40.9	11.0%	4.5-17.6	8.4%	4.8-12.1
No Health Care Coverage	12.0%	0-27.8	26.9%	14.0-39.9	8.2%	3.0-13.4	7.1%	3.0-11.2
Colon Cancer Screening	49.2%	28.4-70.0	59.1%	48.8-69.3	68.8%	59.9-77.8	67.3%	59.7-74.9
Current Smoker	25.3%	0-53.6	35.6%	23.1-48.0	22.9%	10.3-35.6	16.0%	7.7-24.2
Former Smoker	16.0%	0-34.1	17.7%	11.0-24.4	21.9%	13.0-30.7	26.7%	19.8-33.6
No Leisure-Time Physical Activity	17.8%	0-37.4	21.7%	12.1-31.2	12.0%	5.8-18.1	12.8%	7.7-17.8
Obese (BMI ≥ 30)	20.2%	0-43.2	27.4%	17.3-37.6	22.4%	13.1-31.7	23.8%	17.3-30.3
Overweight (BMI ≥ 25)	11.9%	0-26.7	37.6%	24.3-50.8	33.7%	20.4-47.0	37.9%	29.9-45.8

*Note: colon cancer screening is among men over the age of 44 years.

and their cohort statewide. Over a quarter of Ingham County men who earned a high school diploma are without health care coverage, and over a third of them currently smoke.

As expected, results for Ingham County men holding college degrees reflect their socioeconomic advantages and are favorable compared with men at other education levels. Some of the most telling numbers relate to smoking. The highest percentage of former smokers are among the college-educated. Supports for behavior change such as access to smoking cessation programs and smoke-free workplaces should be targeted to other groups. The generally positive results for Ingham County men without a high school diploma (except for colon cancer screening) may be due in part to a younger average age within this group and the size of the sample. (The small number of survey responses in this category causes the very wide CIs seen in Table 2).

Many of our local area findings related to men's health are similar to what has been reported nationally and statewide. Within Michigan, Ingham County has a lower percentage of men without health coverage and a higher percentage of men who report participating in leisure activities. However, health inequities between Black and White men and men of different education levels must be addressed. Improving the overall picture for men's health in Ingham county is a shared responsibility which will require both individual and collective action. Reducing the number of men who smoke, carry excess weight, and lack health care coverage will ultimately benefit all of our community.



References

1. Pinkhasov RM, Shteynshlyuger A, Hakimian P, Lindsay GK, Samadi DB, Shabsigh R. (2010). Are men shortchanged on health? Perspective on life expectancy, morbidity, and mortality in men and women in the United States. *International Journal of Clinical Practice* 64(4): 465-74.
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3. Chronic Disease Epidemiology Unit, Surveillance and Program Evaluation Section, Division of Genomics, Perinatal Health, and Chronic Disease Epidemiology, Bureau of Epidemiology. (2010). Preliminary Estimates for Risk Factors and Health Indicators, State of Michigan, Selected Tables, Michigan Behavioral Risk Factor Survey. Michigan Department of Community Health, Lansing, MI.

Published in 2004, **Our Health is in Our Hands** is a report of the health status of the residents of Ingham County. Not only does it document the traditional topics and behaviors related to health (i.e. physical activity, substance abuse, tobacco use, etc.), but it includes a review of the social determinants of health. Social determinants of health are factors in the social environment that contribute to or detract from the health of individuals and communities. Examples of social determinants of health, discussed in *Our Health is in Our Hands* are social connection, population shifts, and environmental quality. Copies of this document are available at <http://hd.ingham.org/publications.aspx>.

The **Capital Area Behavioral Risk Factor & Social Capital Survey** is a telephone health survey of households that collects information on health behaviors, preventive health practices, health care access, social cohesion and interactions. Modeled after the Michigan Behavioral Risk Factor Survey and the national Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, information gathered from this survey is used to identify emerging health obstacles, monitor health objectives, and develop and evaluate public health policies/programs in Ingham and surrounding counties in the Capital Area.

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