

HEALTH WATCH



Highlights

Rutherford County Health Watch provides a brief summary of the county's health status at a particular point in time. This edition of Health Watch highlights the following:

- **Rutherford County health rankings**
Rutherford County is ranked third healthiest among the 95 counties in Tennessee
- **Rutherford County healthy living index**
Rutherford ranks tenth in the state in providing opportunities for physical activity through parks and recreation facilities
- **Birth outcomes and death measures**
County outcomes and measures compared with national Healthy People 2010 goals
- **Rutherford County health priorities**
As determined by the Rutherford County Wellness Council for 2007–2008
- **Tennessee Non-Smokers Protection Act**
New smoking ban law goes into effect
- **Important health-related Web sites and phone numbers**

Rutherford County Health Rankings

In 2006–07, the newly organized Tennessee Institute for Public Health (TNIPH) produced its first County Health Rankings Index and individual county profiles. To develop this index, the TNIPH measured **Health Outcomes**—mortality, low birth weight, and health status; and **Health Determinants**—health care, health behaviors, socioeconomic factors, and physical environment.

Table 1. Health Outcomes, Rutherford County and Tennessee, 2006

Health Outcome	Tennessee	Rutherford County	Rutherford Rank*
Mortality (years potential life lost per 100,000 population)	9092.7	6873.8	4
Low birth weight (percent)	9.4	8.8	43
General health status (percent fair/poor health)	19.5	22.7	41

* Rank based on 95 counties; the lower the number, the better the health outcome. Source: Tennessee Institute of Public Health, County Health Rankings: 2006 Index

Overall, Rutherford County is ranked the third healthiest among the 95 counties in Tennessee. **Table 1** shows health outcomes for the state and the county along with Rutherford County's rank for each outcome. Though the county's rankings are average for babies born at low birth weight and residents in fair or poor health, its overall mortality ranking is excellent. **Table 2** presents a selection of health determinants included in the TNIPH report.

Rutherford Strengths

- Biennial mammography rate is high
- Smoking during pregnancy is low compared with other counties
- Binge drinking rate is low
- County unemployment rate is low
- Rate of children living in poverty is low compared with other counties
- No lead-poisoned children in the county in 2006

Table 2. Health Determinants Rankings for Rutherford County, 2006

Health Care	Ranking*	Health Behaviors	Ranking*
No health insurance	73	Cigarette smoking	23
Doctors per capita	20	Smoking during pregnancy	9
Dentists per capita	19	Overweight/Obesity (BMI > 30)	73
No influenza vaccinations	70	Low fruit/vegetable consumption (< 5/day)	35
No diabetic eye exams	70	Binge drinking	1
No biennial mammography	3	Motor vehicle crash deaths	20
Socioeconomic Factors	Ranking*	Physical Environment	Ranking*
Level of education	4	Air quality cancer risk	81
Unemployment	3	Air quality hazard index	83
Children age 0-17 in poverty ratio	3	Lead poisoned children	1

* Rank based on 95 counties; the lower the number, the better the ranking. Source: Tennessee Institute of Public Health, County Health Rankings: 2006 Index

Rutherford Challenges

- Lack of health insurance is high
- High rate with no flu vaccinations
- Overweight/obesity rate is high
- Air quality is poor compared with other counties

Additional county health rankings information is available at <http://state.tn.us/tniph/countyprofiles.html>.

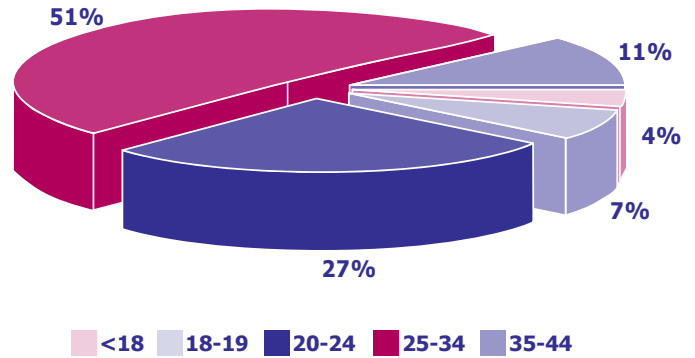
Rutherford County Healthy Living Index

The Tennessee Department of Health contracted with faculty from the Exercise Science and Recreation and Leisure Services programs at MTSU to conduct the first Tennessee Healthy Living Index. From September 2005 through January 2006, researchers surveyed community agencies, parks and recreation providers, businesses, schools, and health educators across the state. Overall, Rutherford County ranked 15th out of 95 counties in **community agencies**—policies, procedures, and infrastructure that facilitate healthy living. It ranked 10th in **parks and recreation** and opportunities for physical activity. Some of county’s positive findings and areas for improvement are listed below. To view the full report, go to www.mtsu.edu/exercisescience and click on “News and Events” and then “Final Report.”

Birth Outcomes

There were 3,641 live births in Rutherford County in 2006, an increase of 4% over the 3,491 live births in 2005. **Figure 1** shows the percentage of live births by maternal age in 2006.

FIGURE 1. Live Births by Maternal Age, Rutherford County, 2006



Source: Tennessee Department of Health, Office of Policy, Planning, and Assessment, Division of Health Statistics.

Rutherford County Healthy Living, Community Agencies

Positive Findings	Areas for Improvement
1. Works with developers to ensure that new construction enhances safety for cyclists and pedestrians and enhances recreational and open space.	1. Need to develop a long-term plan to promote pedestrian and bicycle safety, create a citizen’s advisory board, and designate a staff person to be responsible for pedestrian/bicycle safety.
2. Sidewalks, bike lanes, and trails are being included in transportation infrastructure; new sidewalks are compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act.	2. Set policy to designate bike lanes with all road widening projects, provide bike storage at government/commercial facilities, and require sidewalks in all new residential areas.
3. Supports mixed use zoning, which allows retail businesses and services within walking distance of residential areas, providing potential opportunities for residents to be more physically active.	3. Create a Safe Routes to School program to reduce number of vehicle trips and to teach children that they can walk or bike to school.

Source: Tennessee Healthy Living Index, 2006.

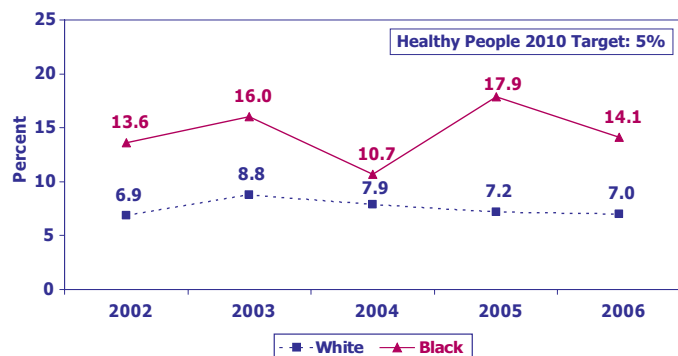
Rutherford County Healthy Living, Parks and Recreation

Positive Findings	Areas for Improvement
1. County governments provide access to financial assistance for low-income families to participate in physical activities such as playing in sports leagues, swimming, and weight training.	1. Need to offer fitness and sports programs that promote physical activity to all residents including those with disabilities.
2. Grant funding is being sought to finance trails, recreation facilities, and sports complexes.	2. Increase safety of playground facilities: all park playgrounds should be inspected on a regular basis.
3. County tax dollars have been allocated for parks and recreation in the current operating budget.	3. To help future planning and educate the public about facilities, compile an inventory of physical activity facilities and opportunities in the county.

Source: Tennessee Healthy Living Index, 2006.

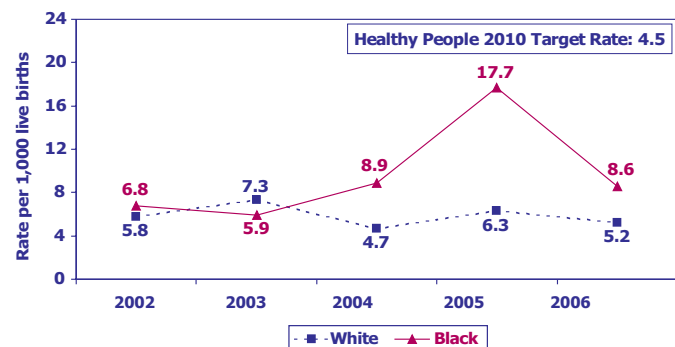
Adverse pregnancy and birth outcomes can impact the health of the community. Low birth weight, for example, can lead to chronic health and medical problems as well as neonatal and infant mortality. While the rate of low weight births has gone down overall, the rate for black infants is double the rate for white infants. Low birth weight percentages for both groups exceed the Healthy People 2010 (HP 2010) target rate of 5% (see **Figure 2**). The infant mortality rate has fluctuated over the years and continues to be higher than the Healthy People 2010 goal of 4.5 deaths per 1,000 births. **Figure 3** shows the infant mortality rates for black and white mothers over the last five years.

FIGURE 2. Percent Low Birth Weight by Maternal Race, Rutherford County, 2002–2006



Source: Tennessee Department of Health, Office of Policy, Planning, and Assessment, Division of Health Statistics.

FIGURE 3. Infant Mortality Rates by Maternal Race, Rutherford County, 2002–2006



Source: Tennessee Department of Health, Office of Policy, Planning, and Assessment, Division of Health Statistics.

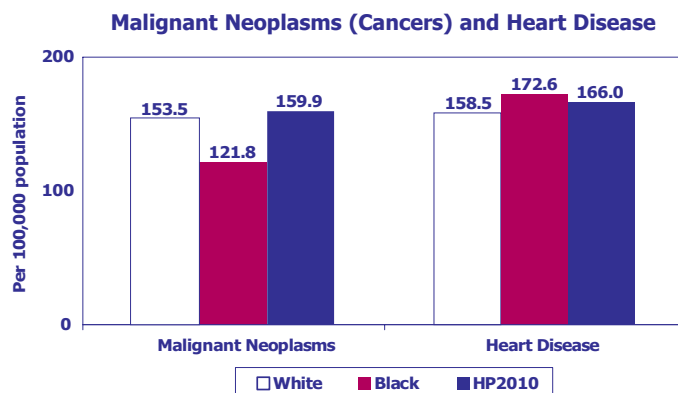
Death Measures

There were 1,229 deaths recorded in Rutherford County in 2005 with a rate of 6 deaths per 1,000 population. Of the 95 Tennessee counties, only Williamson had a lower death rate than Rutherford. Heart disease and cancers accounted for approximately half of all deaths in 2005, as has been the case in the previous five years. The overall death rate for both black and white residents was 6.1 per 1,000 population. However, racial differences exist for some causes of death. For example:

- Fewer black residents die from cancers than do white residents.
- Deaths due to diabetes complications are much lower than HP 2010 targets, but the rate for blacks is double the rate for whites.
- Black residents die from motor vehicle accidents at a rate nearly triple that of white residents; both rates are higher than the HP 2010 goal.
- While more whites die from suicide than blacks, both groups have rates at least double the HP 2010 target.

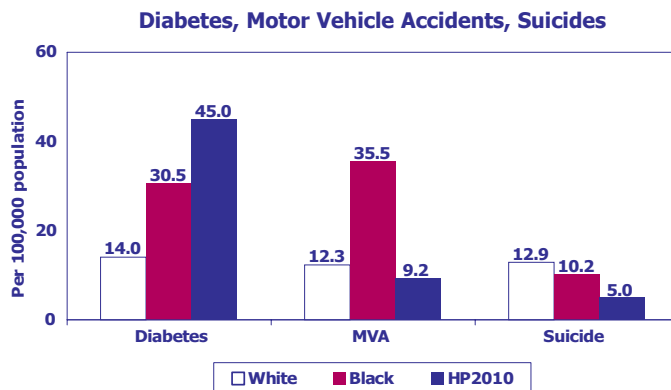
Figures 4 and 5 present and compare age-adjusted death rates by race and selected causes of death to the Healthy People 2010 target rates.

FIGURE 4. Age-Adjusted Death Rates by Race and Cause of Death, Rutherford County, 2005, and HP2010 Targets



Source: Tennessee Department of Health, Office of Policy, Planning, and Assessment, Division of Health Statistics.

FIGURE 5. Age-Adjusted Death Rates by Race and Cause of Death, Rutherford County, 2005, and HP2010 Targets



Source: Tennessee Department of Health, Office of Policy, Planning, and Assessment, Division of Health Statistics.

Rutherford County Health Priorities

The Rutherford County Wellness Council identified three health initiatives for 2007.

Healthy Children

Support, educate, and advocate for a comprehensive school health plan through

- community awareness—publicity and developing community relationships;
- teacher in-service training;
- wellness council expertise and assistance; and
- intergenerational modeling behavior.

Workplace Wellness

Advocate for worksite wellness programs, gather data, use existing resources, and develop relationships to reach employers and employees in the county.

Active Living Neighborhoods

- Identify target audiences
- Revitalize and recreate the Active Living model
- Increase awareness of the Active Living Award

Tennessee Non-Smokers Protection Act

This new law, which went into effect on October 1, 2007, prohibits smoking in nearly all enclosed public places in Tennessee. The smoking ban applies to restaurants, educational facilities, health care facilities, hotels and motels, retail stores and shopping malls, sports arenas, child care and adult day care facilities, and other indoor public spaces. Smoking continues to be allowed in places such as bars that only serve people 21 years of age and older, smoking rooms in hotels, and private clubs.

Individuals may receive personal penalties if they knowingly smoke in an area where smoking is prohibited. If this occurs the person is subject to a civil penalty of \$50.

In Rutherford County, nearly 25% of the population smokes cigarettes and nearly 17% of women smoke during pregnancy. This law will help reduce environmental tobacco smoke and may encourage smokers to quit.

Important Health-related Web Sites and Phone Numbers

- **Tennessee Institute of Public Health, County Health Rankings**
<http://state.tn.us/tniph/countyprofiles.html>
- **Tennessee Healthy Living Index and Report**
www.mtsu.edu/exercisescience/NewsEvents_ExerciseScience.shtml
- **Tennessee Non-Smokers Protection Act (including information on reporting violations)**
<http://health.state.tn.us/smokefreetennessee/>
- **Tennessee Tobacco QuitLine 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)**

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The Center for Health and Human Services

promotes healthy communities within Tennessee. Through our collaborative affiliations and partnerships, we initiate, facilitate, and disseminate research and health-related information and conduct service programs and projects designed to improve population health within our state and beyond its borders.

Among the center's recent projects are the following:

Career Mapping Handbook; Comprehensive Cancer Control Program; Folic Acid Education; Prevention through Understanding: Investigating Unexpected Child Death; Youth Led Tobacco Use Prevention Project.

Please contact us or visit our Web site for more information.

www.mtsu.edu/~achcs

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