

# St. Francis County: A Guide to Healthy Living

## Fact Sheet

A Report from the Arkansas Department of Health



### What Should Adult Men and Women Do to Keep Healthy?

- ◆ Do not smoke. If you do smoke, take steps to quit. Begin by calling the Quitline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669).
- ◆ Ask your doctor or care giver if you should take a baby aspirin daily – most healthy people over 50 should.
- ◆ Drink alcohol in moderation.
- ◆ Always wear seatbelts when traveling in a vehicle.
- ◆ Watch your weight carefully. If you are not overweight, weigh yourself at least weekly to monitor for possible creep in weight gain.
- ◆ If you have unwanted weight gain, consult your family doctor or a nurse or a dietician. Learn about the foods that are very high in calories, how many calories you should have each day to hold your weight steady and how many calories you should have each day to lose weight slowly and safely.
- ◆ Have your blood pressure, blood sugar and blood cholesterol measured at least once a year.
- ◆ Get your flu shot each year.
- ◆ Get a diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough immunization every ten years.
- ◆ Get 30 minutes of exercise each day. Exercise enough to get your pulse rate up to at least 120 beats per minute during the 30 minute workout.
- ◆ Get a screening test for cancer of the colon first at age 50. If the first test is negative, follow your doctor's advice about the frequency of subsequent tests.
- ◆ Get the pneumonia vaccine when you reach age 60.
- ◆ Do not use illegal drugs.

### What Can St. Francis County Parents Do to Improve the Health of Their Children?

- ◆ Stable, safe and nurturing relationships and environments for children are of the utmost importance. The first three years of life are the most important years in a person's lifetime. Read to your infant beginning in the first month of life and continue to do so until they begin to read to themselves on a daily basis.
- ◆ Each child should have a health check-up every year.
- ◆ All children should have all their immunizations.
- ◆ All children should get at least one hour of active play and exercise each day.
- ◆ Put your baby to sleep in a crib with a firm pad and no toys or soft pillows. Be sure the baby sleeps on his back, not his stomach. Infants should not sleep in the

bed with their parents or on a couch. Babies should sleep in a crib!

- ◆ All children should have their Body Mass Index (BMI) measured and for those who have a high value, the school nurse, dietician or the family doctor should be consulted.
- ◆ Do not expose your children to secondhand smoke. Do not allow smoking in the home or in your car.
- ◆ All third grade children should have dental sealants placed. Around age 12 sealants should be placed on the newly erupted molars.
- ◆ All children should drink water that has the proper amount of fluoride present.
- ◆ If firearms are present in the home, have them stored so that children, including teenagers, cannot access them.
- ◆ Be aware of the possibility of house fires. Most fires begin in the kitchen or may be due to faulty electric wiring or electric heaters. Each home should have a working smoke alarm.
- ◆ Use sunscreen regularly to avoid letting your children get sunburned. Sunburns put children at high risk for skin cancer later in life.
- ◆ Infants must be rear-facing in the back seat until at least one year old and at least 20 lbs. Children over 20 lbs and one year of age may then be forward-facing, still in the back seat, in a child safety seat with an internal harness. Once the child weighs at least 40 lbs, the child should ride in a booster seat in the back seat until he/she is 80 lbs and about 4'10" tall.

### What Should Women of Child-bearing Age Do?

- ◆ Strive to be as healthy as you can. Get regular exercise and avoid being overweight. If you are overweight, take steps to see a dietician or your doctor to lose weight.
- ◆ If there are any chronic health problems, do your best to correct or control them. Be sure your blood pressure and blood sugar are normal and that you have no chronic infections.
- ◆ Get tested for HIV.
- ◆ Take daily doses of the vitamin folic acid throughout the time in your life when you could become pregnant.
- ◆ Plan each pregnancy. Practice birth control when you don't want to become pregnant.
- ◆ Do not smoke tobacco. It is doubly important to not smoke during pregnancy.
- ◆ Get a yearly health examination by your doctor or at the local health unit.
- ◆ Do not use illegal drugs.



- ◆ If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation. Do not drink alcohol when pregnant or when trying to become pregnant.
- ◆ Get a mammogram every two years if over the age of 40.
- ◆ Get the flu shot each year.
- ◆ Get a diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough immunization at least every ten years.
- ◆ Always wear a seatbelt when traveling in a motor vehicle and drive safely.

### Health Status of St. Francis County

- ◆ The life expectancy in St. Francis County is among the lowest of all the counties in Arkansas. A baby born today in St. Francis County can expect to live to be 70 years old; a baby born in Benton County can expect to live to be 80 years old.
- ◆ St. Francis County has a much lower rate of new cancer cases per year than the state average rate.
- ◆ St. Francis County residents have one of the highest rates of death from heart disease among all Arkansas counties.
- ◆ St. Francis County ranks in the middle of all Arkansas counties in regard to deaths resulting from stroke.
- ◆ St. Francis County residents have one of the highest case rates for diabetes and its complications among all Arkansas counties (15% of St. Francis County adults have diabetes).
- ◆ High blood pressure is a big problem in St. Francis County; 40% of adults have known high blood pressure.
- ◆ St. Francis County residents have a teen birth rate that is one of the highest among all Arkansas counties.
- ◆ Of the babies in St. Francis County, 16% have a low birth weight (less than 5 ½ lbs at birth): low birth rate increases the risk of infant death in the first year of life.
- ◆ Most third grade children (66%) in St. Francis County have tooth cavities and 50% have untreated tooth cavities.
- ◆ Only 1% of third grade children have had tooth sealants. All third grade children should have tooth sealants.
- ◆ One adult in three in St. Francis County has no health insurance. The U.S. average for adults without health insurance is one in seven.

### Health Behavior in St. Francis County

- ◆ Many adults (36%) report little or no physical activity.
- ◆ Many adults (32%) are obese. This is one of the worst rates in the state.
- ◆ All women over 40 should have a mammogram every two years; 35% of women in St. Francis County do not meet this goal.
- ◆ Cervical cancer screenings every three years is important for adult women; 25% of women in St. Francis County do not meet this goal.
- ◆ Only 30% of St. Francis County residents have been tested for HIV. All adults up to age 65 should have

an HIV test and those in high risk groups should be tested annually.

- ◆ In St. Francis County, 88% of pregnant women receive prenatal care during the first three months of pregnancy. This is a very good record, but the ideal is for all pregnant women to be seen within the first three months of pregnancy.
- ◆ Smoking during pregnancy increases the health risk of the infant – 24% of pregnant women in St. Francis County smoke.
- ◆ Children from age 2 to 3 years should receive all of the recommended immunizations to prevent whooping cough, diphtheria, tetanus, measles, chickenpox, rubella, hepatitis B, polio, meningitis and pneumonia; 76% of children in St. Francis County meet this goal.
- ◆ About one adult in three smokes tobacco.
- ◆ Approximately 164 tobacco users from St. Francis County have called the Tobacco Quitline since its inception in October 2008. This is a low number.
- ◆ St. Francis County adults over the age of 65 rank among the highest (48%) that do not get a flu shot each year.
- ◆ Children can expect to reach adulthood having NO cavities if they do the following: brush and floss daily, drink water containing the proper amount of fluoride and have sealants applied to their molar teeth.

### Health Manpower and Resources

- ◆ There are 12 primary care physicians in St. Francis County; one for every 3,400 persons.
- ◆ There are eight dentists in St. Francis County. If all of the County's dental needs are to be met, the number of dentists needed would be more than double the present number.
- ◆ There are ten water associations in St. Francis County; six provide the proper amount of fluoride in the public drinking water.

