

Division of Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention



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Message from the Director

Much progress has been made over recent years in reducing the toll of chronic disease. Between 1997 and 2006, mortality from heart disease, stroke, and lung cancer (the three leading causes of death) in Los Angeles (LA) County decreased by 27%, 32%, and 23%, respectively. As a result of this declining mortality, life expectancy in the county population has steadily increased, from 78.4 years in 1996 to 80.3 years in 2005. This increased life span can be attributed to both advances in medical care and public health interventions. For example, the decline in lung cancer incidence and mortality is almost entirely attributable to the decline in cigarette smoking that has resulted from the vigorous tobacco control policies and programs in the county and across the state.

Despite this success, chronic diseases and injuries remain the leading causes of premature death and disability. Nationally, chronic disease accounts for approximately 75% of all health care spending. In LA County, heart disease remains the leading cause of premature death (defined as the lives lost before age 75), followed by homicide and motor vehicle crashes. The current obesity epidemic is likely to fuel further increases in chronic disease unless effective measures are identified and implemented to reverse this epidemic. In addition, the aging population (persons 65 and older) is projected to double between 2010 and 2030, and the growth in this segment of the population is likely to further increase the importance of chronic diseases as a public health issue over the next several decades.

In September 2005, the Division of Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention was established with the following programs and surveillance activities and data resources units:

- Injury and Violence Prevention Program
- Nutrition Program
- Office of Senior Health
- Physical Activity and Cardiovascular Health Program
- Policies for Livable, Active Communities and Environments (PLACE)
- Tobacco Control and Prevention Program
- Office of Health Assessment and Epidemiology
- Research, Development & Evaluation

Our mission is to improve health and decrease health disparities in the county population by reducing the occurrence, severity, and consequences of chronic diseases and injuries. Fulfilling this mission will not be straightforward and will require a focus on prevention and addressing the underlying conditions of chronic diseases and injury in the physical, social, and economic environments. Making measurable progress will also require broad partnerships with communities, cities, schools, businesses, health care providers, foundations and health organizations, and government agencies.

Partner with us as we strive to maximize our collective efforts of reducing the burden of chronic disease and injury in the county population and achieve the best possible health for all Angelenos. For further information about the division, please call 213-351-7825 or visit our Web site at <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/chronic>.

Sincerely,



Paul Simon, MD, MPH

Director

Division of Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention

The **INJURY AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM** measures and monitors the occurrence of intentional and unintentional injuries among Los Angeles (LA) County residents and implements strategies to reduce the morbidity and mortality caused by injuries. The program implements injury prevention projects in collaboration with county hospitals, clinics, and public health centers throughout LA County's eight service planning areas (SPAs), as well as with universities, community-based organizations, and other external agencies.

Injury and Violence Prevention in Los Angeles County

The leading causes of injury fatalities and hospitalizations in LA County include homicide, suicide, motor vehicle-related injuries, poisoning, and falls. In general, risk factors associated with the leading causes include the availability of alcohol, drugs, and firearms; intimate partner violence; mental health conditions, such as depression; the use of multiple medicines at the same time (polypharmacy); wearing a seat belt improperly; children not properly fitted and fastened in correctly installed safety seats; leaving a child alone in a motor vehicle; physical inactivity; absence of window guards or locks to keep children from falling out; and deficiency of grab bars in bathrooms and areas with different levels.

Current program projects focus on child pedestrian and passenger safety, data collection and surveillance of violent and poisoning deaths, and collaborations with other agencies to improve the safety of LA County communities.

Important Things to Know

Child Passenger Safety: California state law requires children under 6 years of age or 60 pounds to be properly seated in a car seat or booster seat.



To ensure proper installation of child safety seats, follow the child safety seat instruction manual and the motor vehicle owner's manual. Seats can be inspected at a safety seat inspection station location. Inspection stations in LA County can be located by calling 1-866-732-8243 or visiting the Web site at <http://www.seatcheck.org>.

Children and Car Safety: Kaitlyn's Law in California prohibits leaving a child 6 years of age or younger alone in a motor vehicle. When parents or caregivers take children with them on errands or shopping, they should remember to take the children out of the car.

Suicide Prevention: Warning signs of suicide are often overlooked by most of us. These warning signs can include: talking about death or suicide, feeling hopeless or worthless, not enjoying the things one usually enjoys, using drugs or alcohol, feeling tired or sleeping all of the time, not having an appetite or overeating, crying or being angry frequently, having difficulty concentrating or feeling easily frustrated, and giving sentimental or meaningful items away.

For help in the LA County area, please contact the 24-hour Department of Mental Health helpline at 1-800-854-7771 and ask for "community-based counseling" referrals. You or someone you know can also contact the Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Hotline at 310-391-1253 or 1-877-727-4747.

Injury and Violence Prevention Program

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The **NUTRITION PROGRAM** is dedicated to improving the nutrition of Los Angeles (LA) County residents and promoting healthy ways to eat and enjoy food through nutrition assessments and surveillance, nutrition policy and program development, and assurance of nutrition services that protect and promote the public's health. The Nutrition Program enthusiastically works with community partners and with state and federal agencies to provide quality resources and referrals for anyone searching for nutrition-related information.

Promoting Healthier Food Options and Lifestyles in Los Angeles County

The Nutrition Program is involved with various projects and campaigns. Here are brief descriptions of some of these projects and campaigns:

California Project LEAN is a collaboration between state and local physical activity and nutrition leaders who are dedicated to implementing programs in communities throughout California with the aim of increasing healthy eating and physical activity. Project LEAN's overall mission is to reduce the prevalence of chronic diseases, such as heart disease, cancer, stroke, osteoporosis, and diabetes.

The Ask the Dietitian (ATD) Los Angeles County Program provides dietetic information and counseling at farmers' markets in various locations within the county. The program is staffed with registered dietitians, dietetic interns and students, and volunteers from partnering agencies, including public health nurses.

The Los Angeles Regional Network for a Healthy California implements regional campaigns and programs with funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to encourage healthy eating and physical activity habits among lower-income Angelenos. Some of the campaigns and programs implemented by this network include the African-American Campaign, the Latino Campaign, Children's Power Play! Campaign, and the Retail and Worksite Programs.

Important Things to Know

The ATD Los Angeles County Program visits farmers' markets once a month or every other month. To find out if the ATD program participates in your local farmers market or for more information please visit the Web site, <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/nutrition/atd/ATDindex.htm>

The Worksite Program provides local employers

with a unique variety of tools, resources, and outreach activities to inspire healthy change among their employees. For more information please visit the Web site, <http://www.lapublichealth.org/nut/network/worksite.htm>.

The Retail Program provides local retailers with marketing materials, food demonstrations and store tours, and organizes community events to inspire healthy lifestyle change among consumers while improving the retailers' bottom line. For more information please visit the Web site, <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/nut/Network/retail.htm>.



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Established in the fall of 2006, the **OFFICE OF SENIOR HEALTH** has leveraged its public health expertise and resources to work collaboratively with local agencies (e.g., the Los Angeles City Department of Aging, the Area Agencies on Aging, the Los Angeles County Department of Community and Senior Services, and the California Department of Public Health) and other community partners, including the American Diabetes Association, the Alzheimer's Association, and the Arthritis Foundation, to address key emerging health priorities in the county's aging population.

Senior Health in Los Angeles County

Charged with the mission to maximize the health and quality of life for all older adults in the Greater Los Angeles area, the Office of Senior Health has utilized coalition building as well as evidence-based strategies to identify the needs of the aging population, and to promote healthy aging among older adults and their families.

The program believes that healthy living remains a vital expectation of aging, and that chronic disease and disability should not be seen as natural consequences of growing older. Since most chronic conditions and leading causes of death are largely lifestyle-related, promoting healthy living, such as eating a healthier diet, being more physically active, and maintaining an active mind, remains key to living longer and reducing risk factors for chronic disease.

The office's principal functions include the following:

- Assess and monitor the health status of the 65 and older population, and of the baby boomer generation, expected to reach 65 in less than 20 years
- Conduct public health research on age-related conditions such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, arthritis, and Alzheimer's disease to inform policymakers about evidence-based strategies for addressing public policy and health care priorities in the aging population
- Assure that the aging population in LA County has access to the latest evidence-based information about healthy aging, health care, and social services interventions (e.g., meals program, long-term care, health and dental insurance, and the elder abuse hotline)

Important Things to Know

Support Groups and Services for Caregivers: There are several resources that can help



support family members who are caregivers. The LA County Department of Community and Senior Services can be reached at 213-738-2600 or on the Web at <http://css.lacounty.gov/>. The Alzheimer's Association is another resource that has a 24/7 helpline at 1-800-272-3900 and on the Web at http://www.alz.org/contact_us.asp.

Meal Programs for the Elderly: There are various meal programs for older adults in the county. If you are interested, please contact the LA County Department of Community and Senior Services at 213-738-2600 or go to <http://css.lacounty.gov/>.

Reporting Elder Abuse: If you suspect elder abuse, please contact the LA County Elder Abuse Reporting Hotline at 1-877-4-R-SENIORS or 1-877-477-3646.

Office of Senior Health

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Created in 1999, the **PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH PROGRAM** works with academic and community partners to encourage adoption and implementation of policies that increase health-related physical activity. The program vision is physically fit individuals and families engaging in physical activity on a regular basis, as recommended by the U.S. Surgeon General.

Physical Activity and Cardiovascular Health in Los Angeles County

The Physical Activity and Cardiovascular Health Program works with community organizations, local professional sports teams, and constituencies to promote the importance of physical activity. Most of the program's work is policy-oriented. These policies fall into a number of areas, including worksite wellness, school physical education, joint-use (formal sharing of facilities), parks and recreation programming, land use, and transportation. The program also collaborates with local universities on physical activity research projects.



Important Things to Know

Losing Weight: In general, diets alone won't work. A diet that severely restricts calories is dangerous for anyone, especially for those with diabetes. Regular physical activity, combined with a sensible diet plan, helps maintain a healthy weight and strengthens your body.

Children and adolescents should participate in one hour or more of physical activity per day, three days a week. A majority of the physical activity should be moderate or vigorous aerobic activities. Bone-strengthening (e.g. push-ups, sit-ups, and playing tug-of-war) and muscle-strengthening activities (e.g. jump roping, hopping, and running) should also be incorporated.

Adults gain substantial health benefits from 2.5 hours of moderate aerobic physical activity or 1.25 hours of vigorous physical activity each week. Aerobic activities may include walking briskly, water aerobics, ballroom dancing, jogging, and jumping rope and should be performed in episodes of at least 10 minutes. It is also important for adults to engage in muscle-strengthening activities at least two days a week, including weight training, push-ups, sit-ups, carrying heavy loads and gardening.

Older adults generally should follow the guidelines for adults. If chronic conditions limit the ability of older adults to do 2.5 hours a week of moderate aerobic activity, they should consult a physician and be as physically active as their abilities and conditions allow.

Ways to be safe as well as active. Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans include tips for safe physical activity for different levels of fitness. Please visit the Web site, <http://www.health.gov/paguidelines>.

The program's Web site (listed at the bottom of this page) provides techniques for stretching and strength training, tips for staying active, information on weight-to-hip ratio and body types, and the physical activity pyramid.

Physical Activity and Cardiovascular Health

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The staff at **POLICIES FOR LIVABLE, ACTIVE COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENTS (PLACE)** is dedicated to fostering policy changes that support the development of healthy, active environments for all Los Angeles County residents. The program works to address the environmental conditions within neighborhoods and communities that contribute to the cause and progression of chronic disease.

Developing Healthy, Active Environments in Los Angeles County

The PLACE program recognizes that our physical environment affects our health. The design and structure of our cities, communities, neighborhoods, work sites, schools, and streets can impact how much physical activity we get, what we eat, and the quality of the air we breathe. How we choose to design various aspects of our environment plays an important role in preventing many chronic conditions.

Important Things to Know

Healthy Planning Principles: Communities and cities have a unique capacity to protect and promote the public's health through land use decisions. PLACE promotes the following seven principles for integrating public health into community planning:

- Walkable, bikeable communities: Neighborhoods with safe, attractive and accessible streets, sidewalks, and bike lanes encourage people to walk and bike to local destinations.
- Compact development: The closer destinations are to one another, the more inclined residents will be to use non-motorized or public transportation.
- Affordable housing: Neighborhoods with affordable housing enable diverse residents to live in the same communities and prevent overcrowding, frequent family relocation, and homelessness.
- Public transportation choices: A strong local public transportation system that connects to regional transportation promotes physical activity and reduces air pollution.
- Food environment: Neighborhoods with access to affordable, healthy food choices, such as full-service grocery stores and farmers' markets, allow residents to eat healthier.
- Green space: With more green space, residents are offered a place for recreation and outdoor relaxation, which positively impacts both physical and mental health.



- Air quality: By decreasing dependence on cars and by situating housing and schools far from emission sources, communities can breathe easier and live healthier.

Local Initiatives: In August 2007, the PLACE Program released a Request for Initiatives (RFI), the first of its kind in the LA County Department of Public Health, to address the influence of land use and community design on health. Beginning in July 2008, five agencies, including community-based organizations and cities, received funding for three years to support proposed policies and physical projects that make it easier for residents to incorporate physical activity into their daily lives.

Policies for Livable, Active Communities and Environments (PLACE)

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In November 1988, voters approved the California Tobacco Tax and Health Promotion Act (Proposition 99). With the resulting revenue, the California Department of Health Services Tobacco Control Section funded tobacco control programs in local health departments across the state, including the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health's **TOBACCO CONTROL AND PREVENTION PROGRAM**.

This program has made great strides in tobacco control and continues to evolve to meet its vision of a smoke-free Los Angeles County. To reach its mission to reduce tobacco-related death, disease, and disability, the Tobacco Control and Prevention Program works with community-based organizations, advocates, and professionals to provide services throughout Los Angeles in four priority areas:

- Decreasing exposure to secondhand smoke
- Reducing tobacco availability
- Countering pro-tobacco influences
- Providing cessation services.

Tobacco Control and Prevention in Los Angeles County

Over the past few years, the program has made much progress in addressing several of its focus areas. Strong tobacco retail licensing requirements designed to decrease tobacco availability to youth have been adopted in at least 16 jurisdictions in LA County. Currently, at least 27 jurisdictions in Los Angeles County have policies restricting smoking in outdoor areas, such as parks, and smoking is also prohibited on almost all public beaches.

While the number of smokers in Los Angeles is at an all-time low, the program has joined with over 75 organizations representing health professionals, health care organizations, and private companies in an effort to help Angelenos quit smoking. Even with these profound changes, there is still much to be done.

Important Things to Know

Tobacco Retail License: The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors adopted the Tobacco Retail License ordinance to encourage responsible tobacco retailing and to discourage violations of tobacco-related laws, especially those that prohibit selling tobacco products to minors. Effective April 16, 2008, tobacco retailers in the unincorporated areas of the county must obtain a tobacco retail license. For more information, call the Tobacco

Retail License hotline at 213-351-7317.

Secondhand Smoke Laws: Under California's Smoke Free Workplace Law (Labor Code 6404.5) smoking is prohibited in virtually all enclosed places of employment. For more information or to report smoking violations, contact the Tobacco Control and Prevention Program.

Cessation Services: The California Smokers' Helpline (1-800-NO-BUTTS) provides free services such as counseling, self-help materials, and referrals to local programs. Services are available in multiple languages. For more information, go to <http://www.californiasmokershelpline.org/>, or <http://laquits.org/>.

Coalition for a Tobacco Free Los Angeles County: The mission of the coalition is to empower and mobilize communities to reduce tobacco-related death and disease throughout LA County. All residents and organizations that share the coalition's mission and goals are invited to attend. For more information, contact the Tobacco Control and Prevention Program.



Tobacco Control and Prevention Program

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THE **OFFICE OF HEALTH ASSESSMENT AND EPIDEMIOLOGY** is comprised of four units: the Data Collection and Analysis Unit, the Epidemiology Unit, the Health Assessment Unit, and the Department of Public Health Institutional Review Board.

Health Assessment and Surveillance in Los Angeles County

The Data Collection and Analysis Unit is responsible for ensuring the completeness and accuracy of vital records, including births, deaths, fetal deaths, and stillbirths, as well as communicable diseases that occur in the county. The unit also provides analysis of mortality data and other health status indicators derived from public health data for LA County.

The Epidemiology Unit provides epidemiological support to LA County public health programs, community partners, and other organizations that do not have this capacity. This unit provides epidemiologic consultation and assistance, responds to requests for data, and coordinates Geographic Information Systems (GIS) training and other public health resources, including software licensing and access to geographic data sources.

The Health Assessment Unit conducts the LA County Health Survey, a population-based telephone survey that periodically collects data from a representative sample of county residents.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) currently oversees more than 200 active research projects and gives full review to an average of 72 new projects each year and expedited review or administrative approval to 100 other applications.

Important Things to Know

Birth and Death Registration

Birth certificates, paper and electronic, are completed at the hospital when a baby is born using the Automated Vital Statistics System (AVSS). The Data Collection and Analysis Unit oversees AVSS throughout the county, ensures that birth certificates are processed according to legal requirements, and utilizes the California Electronic Death Registration System to issue paper and electronic death certificates. For more information, please visit <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/dca/>.

Geographic Information Systems

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) are used in public health to map and understand the distribution of health and disease in communities.



Some frequently requested maps may be found on our website, and assistance with more specialized mapping and data needs can be requested using the GIS service request form available at <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/epi/gis.htm>.

The Los Angeles County Health Survey (LACHS) In addition to examining the prevalence of important diseases and health behaviors and the impact of social and physical environments on health, the LACHS also assesses the county population's knowledge and attitudes about health policy on issues ranging from tobacco use to child health.

Institutional Review Board

The board is available to assist Public Health staff in determining whether a proposed activity requires board review. Forms and instructions for completing an IRB application may be obtained by calling 213-250-8675.

Office of Health Assessment and Epidemiology

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Established in 2008, **RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT & EVALUATION** is dedicated to advancing public health practice and research by developing new and innovative tools for program evaluation, policy analysis, and translation of evidence into real world practices.

Public Health Research and Evaluation in Los Angeles County

Research, Development & Evaluation (RDE) recognizes that quality local data are important for policy development and for informing community planning. Cutting edge research is often needed to accomplish this task. This research can augment traditional health assessment and surveillance methods in identifying health disparities in the community. It can also amplify or better characterize the magnitude of health impact from different policy decisions that are made through the legislative process or at the institutional level. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health has been in the forefront of developing these new approaches, including methods for community needs assessment, cost analyses, and health impact assessments.



Important Things to Know

Health Impact Assessment (HIA)

Health impact assessment is a combination of methods whose aim is to assess the health consequences to a population from a policy, project, or program that is not intended to directly improve health. It is a multidisciplinary process in which health effects of an intervention or program is considered within a structured framework, taking into account the opinions and expectations of those who may be affected by the intervention.

Application of HIA in Policy Development

In 2008, under the guidance of Public Health leadership, investigators at RDE conducted a HIA to evaluate the potential impact of menu labeling on the obesity epidemic in Los Angeles County. Using conservative assumptions that calorie postings at the point of purchase would result in at least 10% of large chain restaurant patrons ordering reduced calorie meals, with an average reduction of 100 calories per meal, and with no compensatory increase in other food consumption, menu labeling was found to potentially avert 40.6% of the 6.75 million pound average annual weight gain in the county's population aged 5 years and older. This finding played an important role in the passage of California Senate Bill 1420, which requires calorie postings on menus and menu boards at fast food and other large chain restaurants in the state.

This public health HIA model has garnered the attention of other local health departments, which have used it to assess the potential impacts of menu labeling and other food policies in their jurisdictions.

RDE is dedicated to refining this and other innovative tools to examine other population health issues in the County.

For technical assistance on HIA and other methods for policy analysis, please contact RDE at 213-351-7851.

Research, Development & Evaluation

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