

# CHRONIC DISEASE



● Chronic Disease ● Environmental Health ● Emergency Preparedness ● Family Health  
● Immunizations ● Infectious Disease ● Public Health Laboratory ● Local Public Health ● Minority Health

Early public health services that once centered on infectious diseases gradually shifted toward chronic diseases and began to address diseases caused by nutritional deficiencies like pellagra and rickets.

Historically, chronic diseases have disproportionately affected individuals who are poor and less educated. Public health efforts began to acknowledge these trends, and by the late 1930s and into the 1940s, the Health Department started fledgling cancer and heart programs to help serve indigent populations and those without access to care. These programs continued to grow and develop. By 2000, the Department had added programs such as Breast and Cervical Cancer Control (including BreastCare and the Arkansas Central Cancer Registry), Cardiovascular Health, Diabetes Prevention and Control, Traumatic Brain Injury, Tobacco Prevention and Education, and Worksite Wellness.

In the late 20th century, the obesity epidemic became one of the most pressing public health threats to families and children. The prevalence of diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and stroke began to surge.

The Department began to develop strategies to encourage healthier lifestyles, such as the Healthy Arkansas Initiative in partnership with Governor Mike Huckabee. In 2003, Act 1220 established a statewide Child Health Advisory Committee to improve standards for healthier foods and physical activity in all public schools.

The work of the Chronic Disease Branch continues to expand and now includes the Healthy People 2020: Arkansas's Chronic Disease Framework for Action (a set of Arkansas-specific Healthy People 2020 chronic disease objectives), state prevention plans, coalitions and partnerships, and a new Arkansas Stroke Registry, all to address the prevention and treatment of chronic disease – a top priority for the Department.

**100**  
*Years*  
of Public Health  
in Arkansas



Old State House, original site of the Arkansas Department of Health