



Arkansas Department
of Health
Fay Boozman, M.D.
Director

Arkansas Health Counts

A publication of the Arkansas Center for Health Statistics

Summer, 2000

Volume 6, Issue 2

Groundbreaking survey details Baxter County's Health Risks

by John Hofheimer
HealthWriter

Baxter County is the first in Arkansas to conduct its own Behavioral Risk Factor Survey.

"This is the first time that a county has done a survey. It offers their Hometown Health Improvement coalition the opportunity to see exactly what the problem behaviors in their community are," says Tara Clark-Hendrix, lead program analyst for the Arkansas Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics. "They can prioritize what's important to Baxter County and tailor services to better meet the needs of county residents."

Nearly all the questions on the survey coincide with the state and national Behavioral Risk Factor Survey questions. In this way, the Baxter County health community can see how it's doing relative to the state and country as a whole.

About 3,000 persons are surveyed statewide each year in Arkansas, but that sample isn't large enough to provide accurate information for individual counties.

Because Baxter County identified the funds to survey an additional 847 randomly selected county residents, it is the first county with sufficient data to draw meaningful conclusions, Clark-Hendrix says.

"We were doing the Hometown Health Improvement Project," says Sue McLarry, a registered nurse who served as coordinator of the Baxter County survey. "We [already] had the statewide data--now we can point to data and say 'This is a problem in our county.' "

The survey results just became available, so the various committees only now are beginning to take survey results and discuss strategies, she says.

Because smoking prevalence was even higher than expected, the smoking cessation committee has begun formulating strategies to target teens. Volunteers manning a booth at the fair signed up several people for cessation classes.

Baxter County's rolling terrain, beautiful lakes and relatively inexpensive land have made it a retirement haven, and not coincidentally, the "oldest" county in the state.

By oversampling those 65 and older conclusions can be drawn regarding not just adults, but also older adults.

For instance, while those 65 and older were twice as likely as those in the 50-64 year age group to have had a blood stool test within the past two years, two out of three seniors did not have such a test, which is an important tool in detecting colo-rectal cancers. By the same token, about 56 percent of seniors have had a sigmoidoscopy/colonoscopy.

About 71 percent of women 65 or older had

Continued on page 3

Inside:

Overweight? Figure your body mass index Page 2

Sleep deprivation is widespread Page 3

Two in five of us are overweight:

Go figure

by John Hofheimer

Five percent more Arkansans were overweight in 1999 than the year earlier. Only South Dakota and Oklahoma had higher rates of increase--and just barely.

If we at the Health Department are typical of our neighbors, nearly 40 percent of us are overweight. That's according to the 1999 Arkansas Behavioral Risk Factor Survey.

Within reason, thinner is better at virtually every age, according to the results of one of the biggest studies ever to look at the effects of weight on longevity. The study reviewed American Cancer Society data collected on 324,135 men and women in 1960 and in 1972. The results were published in the January 1, 1998 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

According to the Arkansas survey, men (39 percent) are more likely to be overweight than women (34 percent,) and nonwhites more likely than whites. Middle aged people are most likely to be overweight, peaking at nearly 50 percent among those in the 45-54 age group.

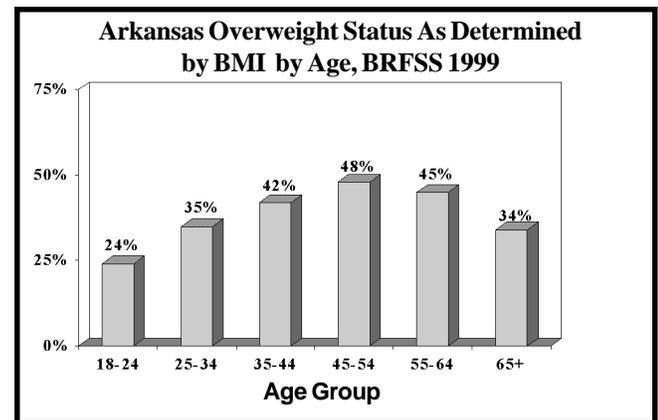
The study found that people who live longest have body mass indexes (BMI) between 19 and 22, which is quite thin.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention considers 22-23 the ideal BMI, while BMI between 18.5 and 24.9 are considered healthy.

A person with a BMI of 25 is now considered overweight*, and anyone with a BMI of 30 or greater is obese.

BMI ranges are based on the effect body weight has on disease and death. A high BMI is predictive of death from cardiovascular disease. Diabetes, cancer, high blood pressure and osteoarthritis are also common consequences of overweight and obesity in adults. Obesity itself is a strong risk factor for premature death.

*The CDC BMI standard for overweight was recently lowered from 27.3 (female) and 27.8 (males) to 25.



Are you overweight? Figure your Body Mass Index

1. Figure your height in inches, multiply it by itself (square it).
2. Divide your weight by that number.
3. Multiply by 704.5

We'll figure the BMI of a 5'6" person weighing 160 pounds.

1. $66 \times 66 = 4,356$
2. $160 \text{ divided } 4,356 = 0.0367$
3. $0.0367 \text{ times } 704.5 = 25.9 \text{ BMI}$

Thus this person is slightly overweight.



Sleepy?

You are in good company

by **Blake Woodson**
Analyst

If you feel like you're not getting enough rest, you are in good--if sleepy--company.

About two-thirds of Arkansans say they don't get enough rest or sleep.

That's according to the 1999 Arkansas Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance survey.

What we know about our sleeping habits is based upon the question "During the past 30 days, for about how many days have you felt you did not get enough rest or sleep?"

Combining data from 1998 and 1999, we know that 16 percent of Arkansans say they were deprived for 20 or 21 days during the month previous. The average Arkansan didn't get enough rest on nine nights out of the previous 30, according to the survey. That means, on the average, that we feel that we don't get enough sleep nearly a third of the time.

Sleep deprivation can lead to many health problems, injury and decreased quality of life. Some experts now feel that

the number of highway deaths attributable to sleep deprivation may rival those caused by drunk drivers.

Older adults tended to say they got enough sleep more often than younger ones.

More men (36 percent) reported getting enough sleep than women (29 percent).

Whites were more likely to have enough rest--an average of eight bad nights a month--than nonwhites, who said they didn't get enough rest 10 nights a month.

Employed people had about twice as many nights when they didn't sleep well as those who were retired or unable to work.

Respondents with children in the house were twice as likely to feel sleep-deprived. And, their degree of sleep deprivation was greater as well. Those with kids at home said they lacked sufficient rest on 11 of the preceding 30 nights, while those without kids reported only 7 days.

Neither being overweight nor being married resulted in a significant difference in likelihood of feeling rested.

Baxter County takes stock

Continued from page 1

had a mammogram within the past two years.

These data will allow community health officials and providers to target seniors in an attempt to increase the prevalence of these important diagnostic tests.

Also determined in the Baxter County survey:

- Twenty one percent reported their health to be only "fair to poor." We know those respondents were more likely to be at least 65, have a high school education or less and have less than \$20,000 in annual household income. That is in line with the state as a whole, where 20 percent reported their health to be fair to poor.

- About 24 percent of adults are current smokers. While better than the state

average of 27 percent, that means about 7,100 Baxter County residents are at risk for smoking-related illnesses.

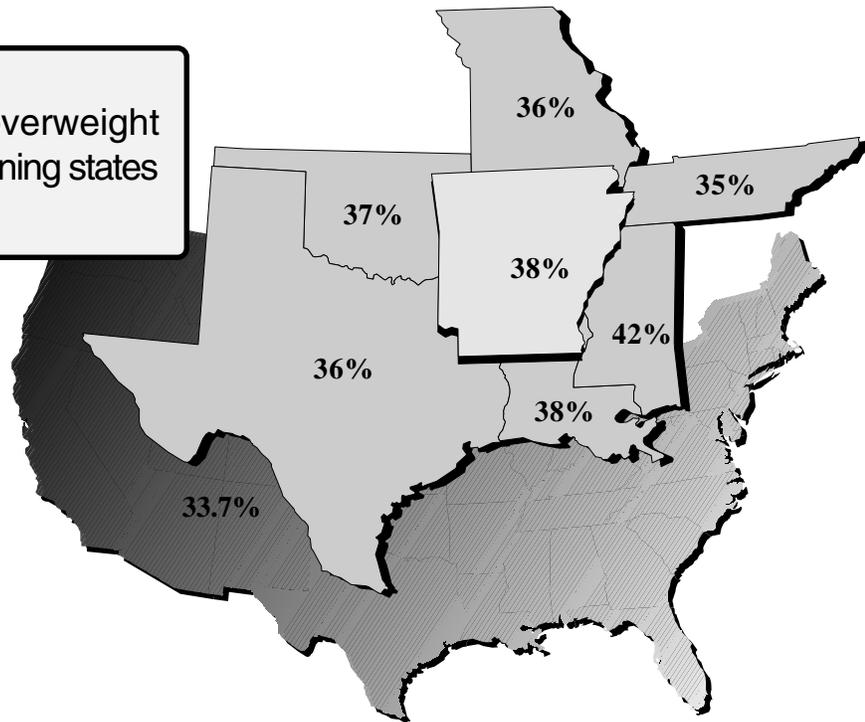
- About one-third of Baxter County residents were overweight, compared to 38 percent of all Arkansas adults.

- One-quarter of the county's adults reported regular and sustained physical activity, compared to only about 15 percent statewide. Walking and gardening were the activities of choice.

Health groups in Fulton and Montgomery counties are considering conducting similar surveys, according to Clark-Hendrix.

The survey was conducted over the summer. "We crunch the data in about a month," Clark-Hendrix said.

Prevalence of overweight
in Arkansas, adjoining states



1999 Behavioral Risk Factor
Surveillance System Survey



Arkansas
Department
of Health

Keeping Your Hometown Healthy

Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage Paid
Little Rock, AR 72205
Permit No. 2641

Arkansas Health Counts

Arkansas Health Department Homepage <http://HealthyArkansas.com/data/data.html>

The Center for Health Statistics
4815 West Markham St., Slot 19
Little Rock, AR 72205-3867
(501) 661-2842

