



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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HAWAII HEALTHIEST STATE FOR OLDER AMERICANS

HONOLULU — The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently reported that Hawaii ranks first in healthy behaviors among the elderly. [The State of Aging and Health in America 2004](#) ranked all states on 15 indicators that present a comprehensive picture of older adult health including a healthy diet, controlling weight and physical activity.

Hawaii ranks the first on five of the 15 indicators. They are as follows:

- lowest average number of physically unhealthy days;
- lowest percentage reporting complete tooth loss;
- lowest percentage reporting a disability;
- lowest percentage reporting no leisure time physical activity;
- lowest percentage of older adults who are obese.

Hawaii also ranks second in the percentage of older adults reporting having their cholesterol checked in the past year, third in the percentage of older adults who are non-smokers and fourth on the percentage of older adults reporting receiving flu vaccine in the past year.

However, the State of Hawaii did not do as well in the areas of cancer screening and other preventive services. Hawaii ranked 49 in older adults getting colonoscopies, and 42 in older women getting mammograms in the past two years. Hawaii ranked 39 in older adults ever receiving a pneumonia shot. For other preventive services, Hawaii ranked low (31 and 33).

While highlighting the overall health of the State of Hawaii's elderly population, the report is unclear when it comes to health disparities among Hawaii's diverse elderly ethnic populations. When age

and ethnicity are examined, Native Hawaiian and Filipino elderly have higher rates of disability and chronic diseases than other ethnic groups.

The report offers a strong body of evidence on the benefits of physical activity and healthy lifestyles for older adults, and points out the challenges to make physical activity more accessible. Although Hawaii ranks highest in areas of physical activity in this report, more recent data in 2003 show that 26 percent of older adults do not get the recommended level of regular physical activity. Finally, only 25 percent of older adults eat the daily recommended servings of fruits and vegetables with Hawaii ranking 48 on this indicator.

State and County aging and public health programs are partnering for the first time to improve the health status of older adults through increased physical activity and improved nutrition in local communities. The partners are in the initial phases of the project and are laying the foundation for community-designed interventions that use evidence-based research. Critical to this strong partnership is building capacity of communities to own and participate in the design, conduct and evaluation of healthy aging programs.

[The State of Aging and Health in America 2004](#) was authored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Merck Institute for Health and Aging, and the Gerontological Society of America and can be found at: www.cdc.gov/aging.

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