

Health Behaviors

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Health behaviors comprise one of the most significant factors in determining our state of health. Personal choices regarding diet and exercise, tobacco and alcohol use, high-risk sexual behavior, and our exposure to violence are responsible for nearly half of our health outcomes. Sometimes poor choices are made regarding these issues because of a lack of knowledge about healthier alternatives. Sometimes peer or family pressure guides health choices. And sometimes people just don't find these important enough to warrant precious time and thought. Yet statistics show that "nearly half of all preventable deaths in Wisconsin each year have been attributed to a handful of health-compromising behaviors" (Bookse BC, Kindig DA, Rohan AK, Jovaag A, Remington PL, 2008, p. 7).

We are generally not a future-oriented culture so preparing today for our lives in the distant future is not a strong suit among Americans. Healthy behaviors were not something in which Waupaca County residents generally excelled either. Some of our poorest marks historically occurred in the area of engaging in healthy behaviors. But some positive changes are occurring.

In 2008, Waupaca County ranked 50th of 73 in health behaviors. This was a dramatic increase from 2007 when Waupaca County ranked 62nd. Individual health behaviors are "modifiable" determinants of health. This means they can be changed and it appears some changes are underway.