

# DuPage among healthiest counties

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DuPage County is one of the healthiest counties in the state according to a report released Wednesday that ranked all 101 Illinois counties.

Developed by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin's Population Health Institute, the report breaks out counties by how healthy people are, or health outcomes, and how healthy people can be, or health factors.

DuPage County was ranked No. 2 in health outcomes and No. 1 in health factors.

"DuPage County residents should be very proud to be ranked one of the healthiest counties in Illinois," DuPage County Board of Health President Linda Kurzawa said in a release.

Five measures were used to assess the level of overall health outcomes: the rate of people dying before age 75, the percentage of people who reported being in fair or poor health, the number of days people reported being in poor physical health, the number of days in poor mental health and the rate of low-birth weight in infants.

Researchers also looked into health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors and physical environment, which included rates of adult smoking, binge drinking, teen pregnancy and the availability of health care, among others.

It was found that poorly ranked counties have multiple challenges to overcome, and those living in healthier areas tend to have higher education levels, are more likely to be employed and have access to healthier foods, parks and recreational facilities, according to the report.

"It is everyone coming together as a system to help move communities toward being healthy," said Stephen Martin, chief operating officer for the Cook County Department of Public Health.

Cook County was rated at No. 81 for health outcomes and No. 59 for health factors. Martin said although the data is very helpful in capturing the many factors that lead to having a healthy community, it is important to keep in mind how it all was collected.

Researchers involved with the study did not come out and speak to individuals within each county, which he said would have built a better understanding of the true complexities that play into each jurisdiction.

The data presented is also nothing new, with figures used from 2006, Martin said.

He said the department is about to embark on its five-year strategic health plan, which will use real-time data and community input to solve some of these issues.

"And that's really where the difference is," he said.

It not just one department looking to correct the problem. Roads have to be built, education needs to be improved and the level of health care has to increase. Martin said this report helps promote the need for improvements in all these areas.

"We, as a health department, are technical advisers to get the county healthy," he said.

Kendall County was ranked No. 1 for health outcomes and two for health factors.

To view the full report online, visit [www.countyhealthrankings.org](http://www.countyhealthrankings.org).