

NEWS

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Ada, Boise, Elmore and Valley Counties Make Gains in Health Rankings

Valley County Considered Overall Healthiest in the State

Valley County and Ada County are Idaho's two overall healthiest counties in the state, according to the seventh annual *County Health Rankings*, released today by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). The rankings compare the health of nearly every county in the nation, looking at more than 30 factors that influence health, including education, housing, jobs, smoking, access to healthy food, and more.

Boise and Elmore counties, which are among Central District Health Department's (CDHD) four-county jurisdiction, also made gains this year, moving up to 25th place and 13th place, respectively. "Seeing upward shifts across all of the four counties we serve is something to be celebrated. Our purpose as one of Idaho's seven local health districts is to create healthy people in healthy communities, and it's something we work closely with community partners on to achieve," said Russ Duke, District Director for CDHD.

For Valley County, this year's move to first place from sixth place in the Health Outcomes category is evidence of the work happening in the community. "Quality of life and good health are nearly synonymous to people in Valley County, and we work collaboratively to create the conditions that foster good health. Our county and city officials, local public health department and both hospitals work together to promote walkability. We educate about the perils of tobacco, illicit drugs, and excess drinking with all its downstream ill effects. Our food pantries distribute healthy recipes, we protect the beauty of our environment — simply put, we value a culture of health," said Lyle Nelson, Director of Community Relations and Health Promotions for St. Luke's McCall.

The *Rankings* evaluate Health Outcomes — elements such as length and quality of life, and Health Factors, which look at elements like health behaviors, physical environments and social and economic factors. The *Rankings* have become an important tool for communities that want to improve health.

The state's largest county moved up five spots to second place in this year's *Rankings* for Health Outcomes and to the number one spot for Health Factors. "Not everyone in the community is aware that Ada County contributes directly to the CDHD budget, and as a partner

with Valley, Elmore and Boise counties, the Ada County Board of Commissioners is extremely pleased to see improvement in reducing the impact of negative health factors. The reduction in the impact of smoking, excessive alcohol use, and obesity, along with improved access to health care leads to longer, healthier and happier lives for our citizens,” said Ada County Commission Chairman, Jim Tibbs.

“Our 1700 county employees see the benefits daily of Ada County policies that provide financial and other assistance, as well as the encouragement offered to many who are able to use alternate means of transportation in their commute to and from work, helping lead to healthier outcomes. We’re thrilled for our citizens to see the positive results of this survey, showing Ada County citizens to be among the healthiest in Idaho,” said Tibbs.

This year’s five healthiest counties in Idaho, starting with most healthy, are Valley County, followed by Ada County, Blaine County, Teton County, and Kootenai County.

More about the County Health Rankings

The *Rankings* are based on the latest publicly available data for each county and are unique local tools that every county can use to measure where its residents stand on multiple factors that influence health compared to other counties in their state. To view the county health rankings, visit www.countyhealthrankings.org.

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