

Chronic Diseases in Klamath County

2008 Community Assessment Executive Summary

The Situation:

America is facing a health care crisis. Even though we spend more than any other nation on health care, we are not healthier. In Oregon, heart disease, stroke, cancers, diabetes, and chronic lower respiratory diseases account for more than three of five deaths. Many people are robbed of their health and quality of life from diseases that could be prevented through improved diet, more physical activity and tobacco cessation.

Its time to build a vision for our community—one that supports healthy choices where we live, work and play. It's important to create a roadmap now because

- Healthy kids learn better and are more likely to become healthy adults free of disability and disease.
- Good health is good for business—healthy employees are more productive and have less absenteeism.
- Treating chronic diseases is costly, the government spends 75% of its health care budget treating those with chronic diseases.
- Prevention works. Since 1996, the year before the Oregon Tobacco Prevention and Education Program began, cigarette use in Oregon has fallen 41%.

What We Did:

Klamath County Department of Public Health in partnership with the Healthy Active Klamath Coalition assessed local data in the summer of 2008. The goal was to determine priorities for reducing the burden of diseases most closely linked to physical inactivity, poor nutrition and tobacco use with emphasis on policies and environmental influences.

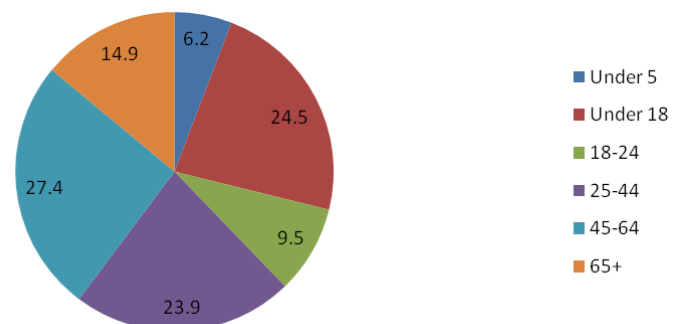
What We Found:

Demographics

Demographics can offer clues on which groups are at highest risk for chronic disease; characteristics may include age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, disability, etc. Percentages are based on total county population of 65,815.

- 30% of all adults have at least one chronic disease.
- The county's aging population continues to grow, 14.9% are age 65 or older (Oregon 12.5%).
- 18.2% of all residents live in poverty (Oregon 13%). 51.7% of students in KC schools receive free or reduced price meals.
- 18% of people over age 5 have a disability.
- 13.5% of residents are uninsured (Oregon 15.6%)
- Hispanic/Latino (8.9%) and American Indian/Alaska Native (3.4%) are the primary ethnic groups.
- 15.9% of adults over 25 years hold a Bachelor's degree or higher (Oregon 27.5%)

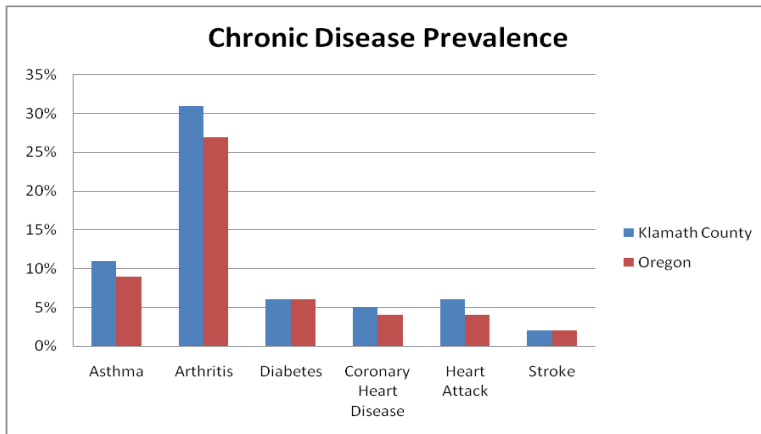
Klamath County Population
Total Population 65,815



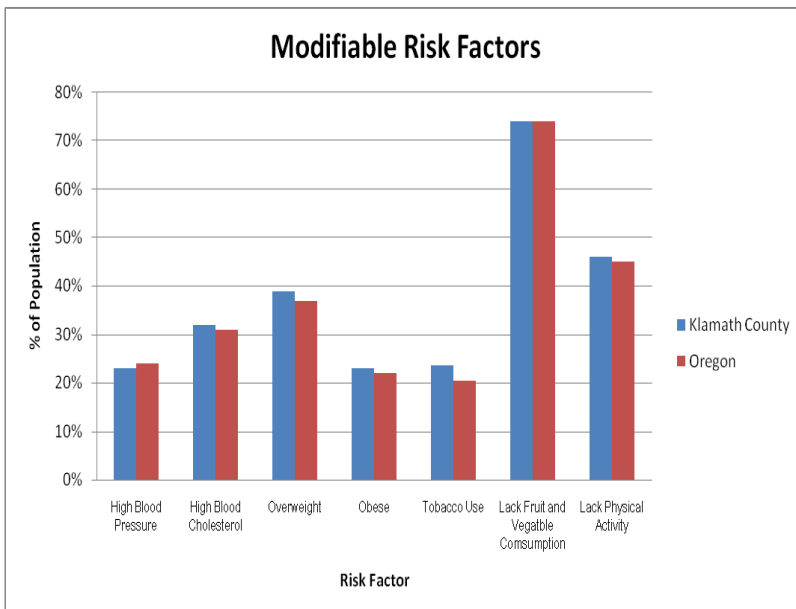
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Chronic Disease Prevalence

The prevalence of chronic diseases in Klamath County is higher than the state average for asthma, arthritis, coronary heart disease and heart attacks (see figure below).



Factors such as obesity, lack of adequate fruits/vegetables or lack of physical activity can be modified or changed unlike heredity factors. The prevalence of these risk factors in Klamath County is on par with the state averages or slightly higher (see figure below).



In Klamath County, the total tobacco-related economic costs alone (medical care, lost productivity, decreased quality of life and human suffering) total \$56.7 million a year.

Built Environment

Community design can influence health. For example, people living near walking trails or those using public transportation get more physical activity.

Although the city and the county have comprehensive land use and transportation plans, human health is not specifically addressed. Some aspects of the plan are helpful such as the requirement for street lighting. Others less helpful such as no policy for use of traffic calming concepts. Pedestrian and bike pathways do exist but are disjointed.

As Klamath Falls grows and becomes more urbanized, non-motorized travel needs to be encouraged.

Nutrition

Fruits and vegetables are good for health. Packed with nutrients and low in calories, they help decrease risk for most chronic diseases. Unfortunately they are not always accessible or affordable in Klamath Falls.

Only 26% of Klamath County adults consume the minimum recommended 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day. Youth eat even less. Only 23% of 8th graders and 15% of 11th graders meet the recommendation.

A smattering of farmers markets, subscription farms and farm stands exist mainly near the urban areas. Some of the markets accepts WIC and Senior coupons but none accept Oregon Trail Cards. Despite our short growing season, the Food Bank distributes 45,000 pounds of donated produce to those in need annually.

There are no formal policies within the city or county that support farmers markets, community gardens or access to healthy foods.

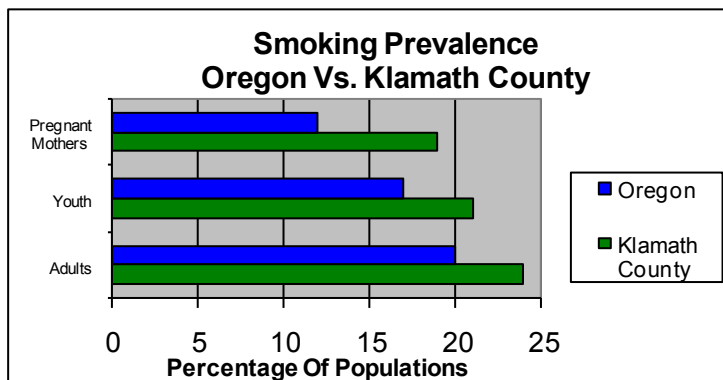
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Tobacco Use

Tobacco use significantly impacts chronic disease. The rate of adult smokers in Klamath County is higher than the state (23.7 vs 20.4%).

More teens use tobacco in Klamath as well. 21% of 11th graders smoke cigarettes (OR 17%) and 19% use smokeless tobacco (OR 12%). As expected second hand smoke is an issue.

Being pregnant doesn't deter all Klamath women from smoking. 19.6% of infants were born to mothers who use tobacco during pregnancy (OR 12.3%).



There are no city or county policies that protect the public from second hand smoke. Policies are starting to emerge to prohibit smoking in private multi-use housing. There are no such policies in place for public housing.

Sky Lakes Medical Center adopted a Tobacco Free Campus policy in 2007. Klamath Community College and OIT are considering such a policy but have not yet adopted one.

In addition to the Oregon Quit Line, local cessation programs are provided by Cascade Comprehensive Care and Klamath Tribes.

School Wellness

There are opportunities in schools to model, teach and support healthy behavior for our youth.

Both school districts have adopted Gold Standard Tobacco Free School Policies.

Both school districts have worked diligently to establish School Wellness Policies however neither district meets the minimum requirements outlined in the Child Nutrition and WIC reauthorization Act (2004) such as Safe Routes to Schools.

Self-Management

Evidence –based self-management programs provide tools for healthy living. Three programs exist in Klamath County: *Living Well with Chronic Conditions*, *Meals Made Easy for Diabetes* (OSU Extension Service) and *Arthritis Foundation Aquatic Program* (YMCA). Both serve only the urban area and are generally underutilized.

Conclusion:

Klamath County has both barriers and assets for building a healthy community. Our priorities are to support policies and programs that:

- Build interdisciplinary partnerships
- Discourage tobacco use
- Encourage consumption of local produce
- Expand evidence-based self management programs
- Incorporate health aspects into community design and planning

This assessment was completed by the Klamath County Health Department and the Healthy Active Klamath Coalition.



References: (1) Keeping Oregonians Healthy: Preventing Chronic Diseases by Reducing Tobacco Use, Improving Diet, and Promoting Physical Activity and Preventive Screenings, (July, 2007); (2) Oregon Tobacco Facts (December, 2007); (3) Oregon Health Policy and Research—Policy Analysis Unit; (3) US Bureau of the Census, American Community Profile 2007 (March, 2008); (5) Oregon Population Update: Special Topics in Social Demography—Poverty in Oregon; (6) A Healthy Active Oregon—Statewide Physical Activity and Nutrition Plan 2007-2012