

Meriden Department of Health and Human Services

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www.meridenhealth.com

2008 Community Health Survey Highlights

In April 2008, the Meriden Health Department partnered with the Center for Research and Public Policy for a major research project. The goal was to determine the health status and health practices of Meriden residents. A total of 400 residents over the age of 18 were called and surveyed. Households were chosen at random from a list of Meriden phone numbers.

We asked questions about:

- Quality of life
- Carbon monoxide and smoke detector
- Signs and symptoms of a heart attack and stroke
- Adult vaccinations
- Physical activity
- Nutrition
- Mosquito and tickborne disease
- Mental health
- Barriers to medical and dental care
- Perception of health problems in the community
- Tobacco and alcohol use
- Injury prevention
- Emergency preparedness
- Meriden Health Department programs and services



The information we gathered will be used to develop programs and policies that address the specific needs of our residents.

This newsletter is just a highlight of the information we collected. A full report is available at the Meriden Health Department, the Meriden Public Library, and on our website at www.meridenhealth.com.

Thank You!

Gracias!

Grazie! Dzieki!

Thank you to the 400 residents who took the time to participate in the survey.

HIGHLIGHTS

The Good News...

- 92% say their quality of life is very good or good.
- 80% check their smoke detector battery at least twice per year.
- Our dogs (97%) and cats (90%) are up-to-date on their rabies vaccine.
- 92% have no difficulties in getting needed dental care.
- 85% completely ban smoking in the home.
- 88% always wear a seat belt when riding and driving in car.

The Bad News...

- 37% reported having high blood pressure.
- 48% do not take any protective measures against West Nile Virus or Lyme Disease.
- 43% never wear a helmet when riding a bicycle.
- 16% do not keep non-prescription medications in a safe place at home.

Physical Activity and Nutrition

Eating a well-balanced diet and being physically active are good habits for health.

Physical Activity

The good news is that 49% of residents reported participating in moderate exercise for at least 30 minutes more than 3 times per week. However, nearly a quarter (22%) participate in no moderate exercise during the week. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that adults engage in physical activity for at least 30 minutes most days of the week.

Home is the most common place to exercise, with 75% of residents exercising either inside or outside at home. 12% exercise at a gym, and other 5% utilize our City parks for their workout.



Lack of time (44%) and physical limitations (43%) were the most common reasons residents do not participate in physical activity on a regular basis.

Nutrition

Over half of respondents (57%) reported that they eat fast food once per week, while another 30% eat fast food twice a week.

Unfortunately, Meriden residents do not eat the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables. Our

survey found that on average, residents only eat 2 servings of fruits and vegetables a day. The National Institutes of Health recommend getting 5 or *more* servings of fruits and vegetables a day.

A majority of Meriden residents (44%) reported always using the food nutrition label when shopping, however it is unclear from this survey if the information on the label influences the types of items they purchase and eat.

By eating properly and exercising regularly, Meriden residents could potentially fend off a variety of chronic conditions and diseases such as high blood pressure, overweight and obesity, diabetes, high cholesterol, heart disease, and many forms of cancer.

Tobacco Use

Our survey found that 10% of the adult population in Meriden smoke cigarettes. About 2% use other forms of tobacco. The Connecticut average for smoking is 18%.



Smoking dramatically increases one's risk for heart attack, stroke, chronic bronchitis, asthma, impotence, cavities, and several cancers. Tobacco is very addictive, both physically and emotionally, and that is why most people continue to smoke despite knowledge of the dreadful diseases it causes. The good news is Of those that do smoke, 68% are looking to quit within the next year.

More good news is that 85% of residents completely ban smoking from their home. However, 11% still allow smoking in the home, which exposes people to the harmful effects of second hand smoke.

If you are a smoker, the Health Department would like to help you quit. Call our Smoking Cessation Counselor at 630-4104 for more information.

Violence and Injury Prevention

An injury affects more than just the person injured—it affects everyone involved in the injured person’s life. Injuries have physical, emotional, and financial consequences that can impact the lives of individuals, families, and society. Some injuries can result in temporary or long-term disability.

Family Violence

Family violence does not discriminate, and can include a range of physical, sexual, and emotional maltreatment by one family member against another. This survey revealed that 5% of residents, or a potential 2,160 adults, have been the victim of both physical and verbal violence.

Bicycle Helmet Use

Wearing a bicycle helmet correctly each and every time you ride a bike can greatly reduce the risk of a head injury as a result of a fall.



Despite this, 43% of Meriden residents never wear a helmet when riding a bicycle. Adults and children should always wear a bicycle helmet when riding a bike. The Meriden Health Department sells bicycle helmets at cost; call 630-4234 for more

information.

Firearm Safety

Our survey found that 17% of residents have firearms in the home, and of those 80% keep them in a locked safe. However, 20% of those who have firearms in the home do not keep them locked.

Medication Safety

A majority of residents (87%) reported keeping prescription medications in safe place in their home where children and teens cannot get them. The number is slightly lower for non-prescription medications—only 84% keep them in a safe place where children are unable to reach them.

Recognizing Symptoms of Heart Attack and Stroke

Heart attack and stroke are the number one and number three causes of death for both men and women in the United States. High blood pressure, high cholesterol, a poor diet, lack of physical activity, and smoking all increase the risk of suffering from a heart attack or stroke. In fact, 37% of Meriden residents reported being told by a medical professional that they currently have high blood pressure.

It is important to recognize the signs and symptoms of a heart attack and stroke in order to

provide quick emergency care and call 9-1-1. Fortunately, when asked what the signs of a heart attack were, 81% of residents reported chest pain or discomfort, 52% pain in the jaw or arm, and 22% feeling weak, lightheaded or faint.

Further education is needed, however, on the signs of a stroke. Only 49% of residents reported weakness of the face, arm, or leg muscles as a sign; 40% reported sudden confusion or trouble speaking. Almost a quarter of respondents, 23%, were not

able to name a single sign of stroke.



The Meriden Health Department’s cardiovascular health program for women, called W.I.S.H.H. (Women Interested in Staying Heart Healthy).has information about heart attack and stroke. Call 630-4238 for more information.

Meriden Department of Health and Human Services



Programs and Services

- Clinic Services—630-4234
- School Health Nursing—630-4237
- Environmental Health - 630-4226
- Community Health Education—630-4238
- HIV Counseling & Testing—630-4176
- Smoking Cessation—630-4104
- Public Health Emergency Response—630-4240
- Social Services—630-4240
- Youth Services—630-4225
- School Readiness—630-4236
- Senior Center—237-0066
- Women, Infants, & Children (WIC) - 630-4245

OFFICES
Open to the Public
Monday-Friday
8:00am—4:30pm

Top 5 Community Health Concerns

What do you consider to be the biggest community health related issue in Meriden?

1. Health insurance costs
2. Drugs
3. Clean food and water
4. Obesity in youth
5. Small size of emergency rooms

Public Health Emergency Preparedness

Would you be prepared in the event of a local emergency? 91% of Meriden residents have enough supplies at home such as food, water, and medicine to last one week in case of an area emergency. However, a potential 3,245 adult residents (8%) do not have enough supplies on hand. By taking time now to prepare emergency water and food and disaster supplies kit, you can provide for your entire family in the event of an emergency.

88% of Meriden residents are able to evacuate on their own in case of an emergency, but 7% (or a potential 3,200 adult residents) would need help.

Copies of the City of Meriden Emergency Planning Guide, as well as information on the Special Needs registry for those needing help evacuating in case of an emergency, are available at the Health Department, or by calling 630-4240.

