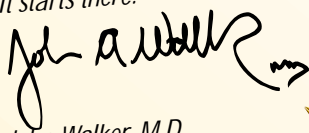


Dear Citizens of Stanislaus County,

"Leading the way to a healthy community" is not only the vision of the SCHSA, it is a commitment that the agency genuinely strives to achieve. One of our strategic goals is to improve the health status of the community through focused efforts with measurable outcomes. Achieving such a goal requires us to review the community's health profile. The profile offers important data for the recommendation of policy and development of programs to improve the public's health. This report also provides the reader information on various community health improvement projects and activities that have been/ are being implemented.

Public Health doesn't reside at 820 Scenic, it starts there.



John Walker, M.D.
Public Health Officer
Stanislaus County
Health Services Agency



The Many Functions of Public Health

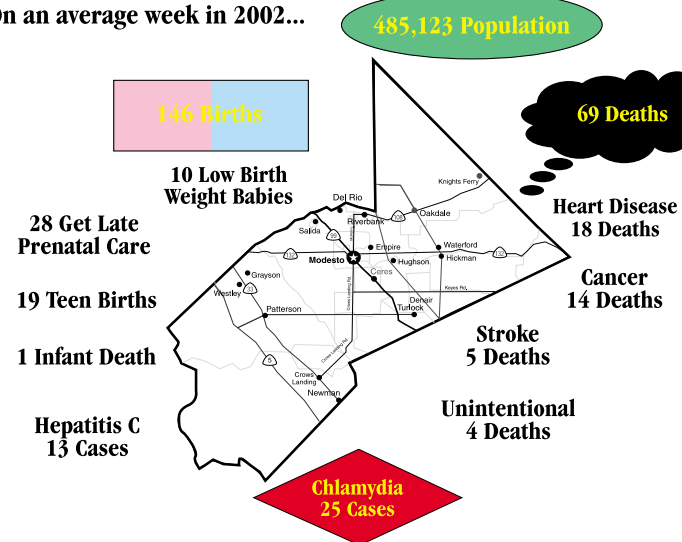
What is the first thing you think of when you hear of Public Health? Immunizations?

Vaccinations? The old County hospital? Health care services to the underserved? Actually, there is a lot more to Public Health than you may think. 21st Century Public Health encompasses the safety and well being of all people. Public Health has evolved from providing the traditional services to overseeing the total health of the community. Additional programs/activities that we focus on are:

- Emergency Preparedness
- Outreach • Case Management
- Health Promotion (including tobacco, nutrition, physical activity, and motor vehicle/ car seat safety)
- Maternal and Child Health
- Teen Pregnancy Prevention
- Tracking of Births and Deaths
- Disease Surveillance
- Domestic Violence Prevention
- Public Health Laboratory Service

Stanislaus County Health Service Agency (SCHSA) works with the community and other organizations to assess the health of the county through surveys, focus

On an average week in 2002...



groups, and data from other relevant health indicators. We feel it is important to keep the community informed by presenting the annual Public Health report and posting information on the HSA website (www.hsahealth.org). Since the spectrum of prevention starts with an individual and ends with policy makers, SCHSA will continue building community involvement and partnerships that lead to policy development which creates a healthier community.

Childhood Obesity

Childhood obesity has reached epidemic proportions in the nation. To address this problem, the theme of the **National Public Health Week (April 7-13)** this year is overweight and obesity. Overweight children become sick more often, perform more poorly in school, are at heightened risk for a number of chronic childhood diseases and conditions, and are increasingly being diagnosed with "adult" diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and increased blood cholesterol. In addition, overweight children often experience discrimination and stigmatization by society and their peers, which contribute to psychological stress and low self esteem.



Learning to read food labels during "Kids Off the Couch" Program.

In Stanislaus County, over 10% of the children registered in the Child Health and Disability Prevention program over the past decade are obese. In the last few years, there has been an increase in percentage of obese children. In 2001, 15% of the CHDP children in our county were obese while the state average was 17.5%. Although our county is below the state, it is well below the national objective for 2010, which is 5%.

Weight gain among children is often due to a combination of factors including unhealthy eating habits, sedentary lifestyle, genetic makeup, and family lifestyle. Parents and primary caregivers have a tremendous impact on children's eating behaviors and physical activity. Many of us lack the knowledge of basic nutrition, which is not readily available in this fast paced age of television commercials, fast foods, computers, and video games.

The best way for a family to start taking charge in preventing this epidemic is to increase physical activity, limit unhealthy foods/ beverages by:

- Limiting TV and computer time
- Incorporating more walking in family life
- Awareness of physical activities in schools
- Limit the consumption of sodas and juices
- Drink water between meals
- Decrease use of fast foods and unhealthy snacks
- Fruits and vegetables can make tasty snacks

To solve the problem of childhood obesity, the community needs to gain knowledge, change behavior, and influence others/ policies. HSA is starting an initiative to increase awareness and educate the community about this issue. The Nutrition and Fitness Council, spearheaded by HSA, is encouraging children and parents to walk to school and is working with schools on setting nutrition guidelines/policies. Different groups and organizations in our community are taking steps to prevent this epidemic. The West Modesto King Kennedy Neighborhood Collaborative had obtained funding to implement a "Kids Off the Couch" Project. By joining this program, parents learn about nutrition, physical activity, and ways to change their daily behavior. As the saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child, especially a healthy one.



2. Preparing for Terrorism

Take precautions when traveling. Be aware of conspicuous or unusual behavior. Do not accept packages from strangers. Do not leave luggage unattended. Unusual behavior, suspicious packages and strange devices should be promptly reported to the police or security personnel.