

MECKLENBURG COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT - 5 PUBLIC HEALTH CHALLENGES

1 Chronic Diseases - Tobacco Use

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death, disease and disability. Smoking harms nearly every organ in the body and is a major risk factor for lung disease, stroke and heart disease.

- Approximately 127,000 current smokers (17%) in Mecklenburg
- Second hand exposure causes cancer and heart disease, particularly dangerous to those with heart disease
- Policy changes (bans and price increase) have the greatest impact on reducing tobacco use

2 Chronic Diseases - Physical Activity and Nutrition

Lack of physical activity and poor nutrition contribute to high blood pressure, high cholesterol and obesity. These conditions may lead to chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes.

- 20% Mecklenburg County residents report NO physical activity
- Approximately 75,000 residents have limited access to purchase healthy foods
- Effective interventions make healthy food more available and provide convenient and attractive ways to be active

3 Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

As many as 1 in 8 Mecklenburg County residents are unaware of their HIV/AIDS infection status. When people become aware of their infection and are provided with immediate linkages to prevention and care services, most take measures to reduce their risk of transmitting HIV to others.

- Approximately 5,300 are living with HIV
- 1 in 4 new infections are 18-24 years
- Testing & Treatment interventions have the greatest impact on reducing HIV
- Pre-exposure prophylaxis is an emerging approach to prevention

4 Unintended Pregnancy

Unintended pregnancies are often associated with poorer birth outcomes for both mother and baby as compared to pregnancies that are planned. Unintended pregnancy has been linked to reduced economic mobility and can impact multiple social determinants of health across a woman's lifespan including educational attainment, employment and poverty.

- Approximately 50% pregnancies are unintended
- Associated with poor birth outcomes
- Linked to reduced economic mobility
- New family planning technologies have the greatest impact on reducing unintended pregnancies

5 Violence

Violence is not traditionally understood as a public health issue but this is beginning to change as data illustrate the impacts on other community health indicators such as academic achievement, substance abuse and mental health.

- Homicide was the leading cause of death for the 15 – 24 age group in 2013
- Evidence-based interventions are emerging to prevent long term health risks of exposure to violence