

Utah Health Status Update: Lifestyle and Chronic Diseases in Utah

March 1998

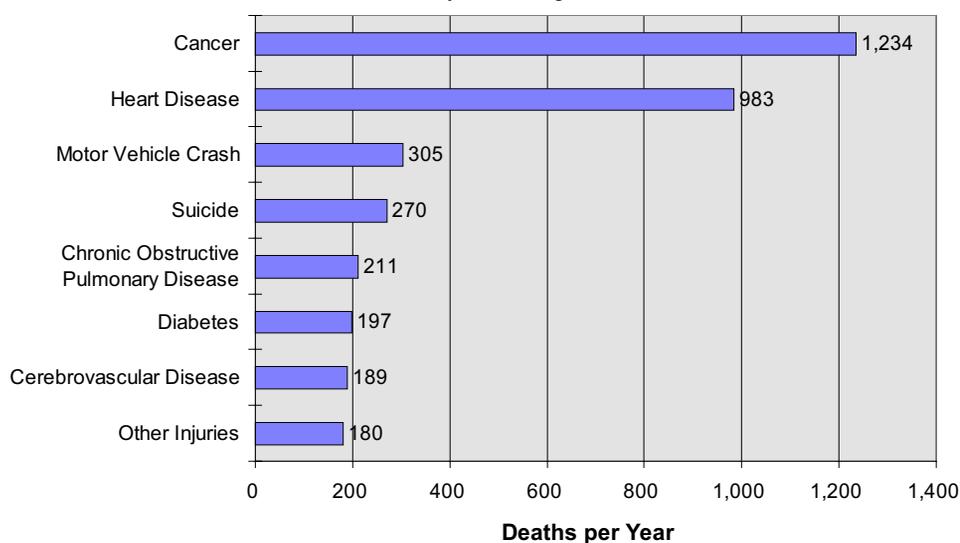
Utah Department of Health

Chronic diseases, including heart disease, cancer, and diabetes, are leading causes of death, disability, and health care costs in Utah and the United States. Chronic diseases are often considered a normal part of aging, but the risks of several chronic diseases can be reduced substantially by lifestyle choices, such as a healthy diet, exercise, and not smoking. The Utah Department of Health recently surveyed Utahns to assess their knowledge of chronic diseases, their knowledge of the lifestyles and behaviors that can help prevent those diseases, and the lifestyle and behavioral choices those Utahns had made themselves. That survey indicated that:

- Utahns rated heart disease and cancer as the diseases of most concern for their own health, but 38% of Utahns did not either identify heart disease or cancer as the most common cause of death for Utahns.
- Utahns rated exercise and a healthy diet as the health behaviors that are most important to their health.
- Utahns reported a lower smoking rate than any other state in 1996.
- Only about a quarter of Utahns reported regular exercise.
- Over two thirds of Utahns reported a low fat diet, but only one in five Utahns reported eating at least 5 fruits or vegetables each day (5-A-Day).
- Utahns were more likely to rate exercise and a healthy diet as important than they were to report getting regular exercise or maintaining a healthy diet (low in fat and with at least 5 servings of fruits or vegetables daily).
- Utahns who rated heart disease as most important were more likely to report a healthy diet, but only slightly more likely to report regular exercise.
- Utahns were more likely to report maintaining a low fat diet than either regular exercise or eating at least 5 servings of fruits or vegetables each day.
- Even among Utahns who reported that exercise and a healthy diet were important, only 31% reported healthy levels of exercise (5+ times per week for 30 minutes at any intensity) and only 22% reported eating at least 5 servings of fruits or vegetables each day.

Leading Causes of Premature Death

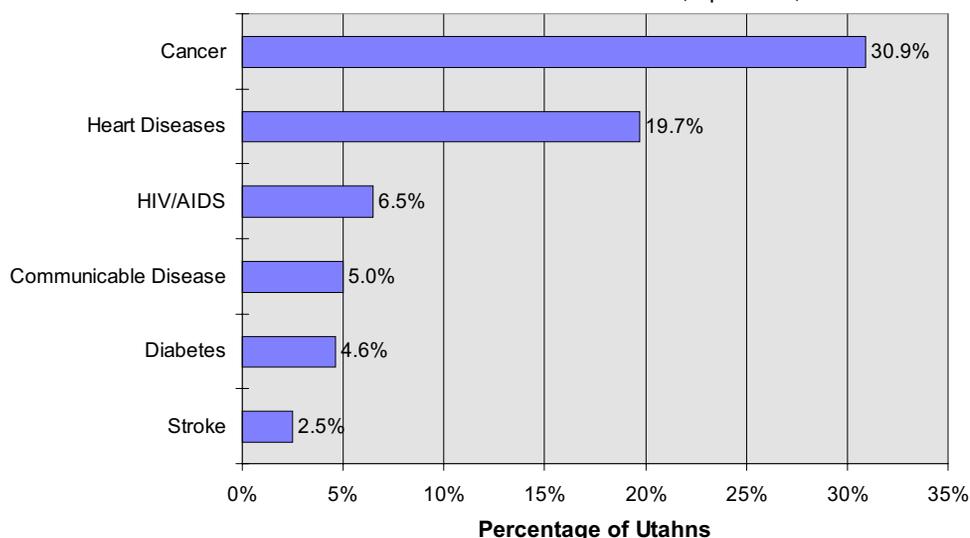
Annual number of deaths by cause, age <75, Utah 1994-1996



These causes represented 71% of all deaths of persons age <75 in those years.

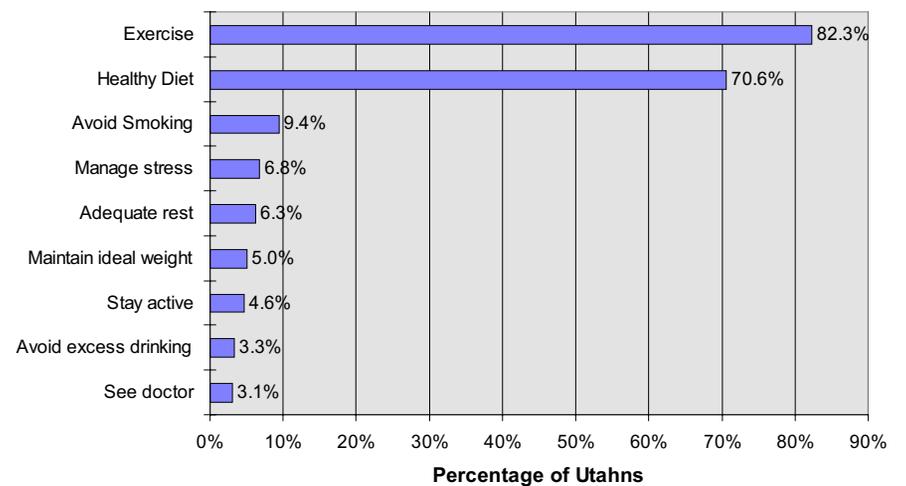
Diseases Utahns are Concerned About

Percentages of Utah adults (age 18 or over) who indicated selected diseases caused them the most concern for their own health, April-June, 1996.



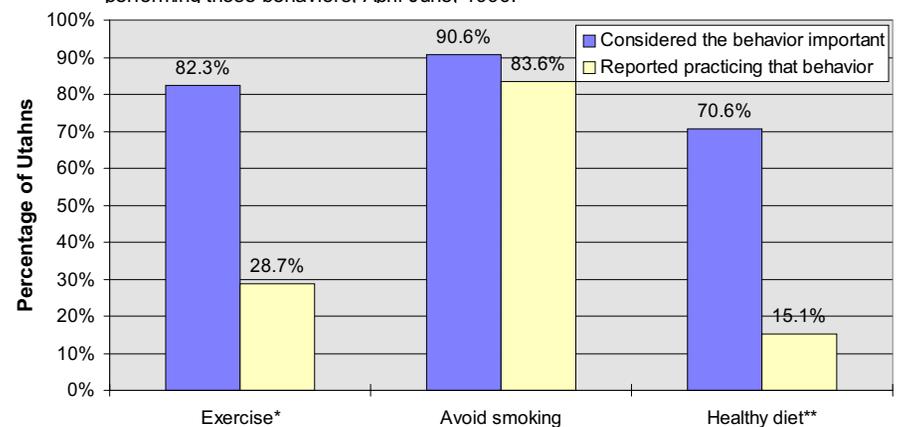
Utahns' Beliefs about Healthy Behaviors

Percentage of Utah adults (age 18 or over) according to the behaviors they listed as most important for them to stay healthy, April-June, 1996.



Knowledge but Not Action

Percentage of Utah adults (age 18 or over) who reported that selected behaviors were "most important" for their own health, compared with those who reported performing those behaviors. April-June, 1996.

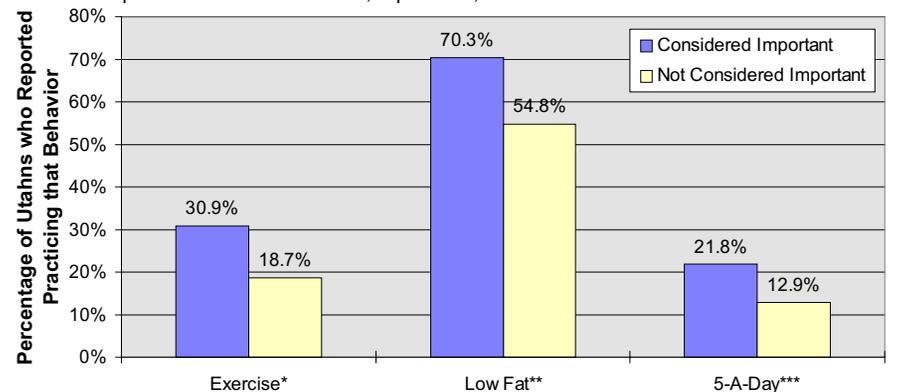


* Exercise indicates 5+ times per week for ≥30 minutes at any intensity.

** Healthy diet indicates low fat and ≥ 5 servings of fruits/vegetables per day.

How Health Beliefs Affect Health Behaviors

Percentage of Utah adults (age 18 and over) who reported selected health behaviors according to whether they considered that behavior to be important for their own health, April-June, 1996.

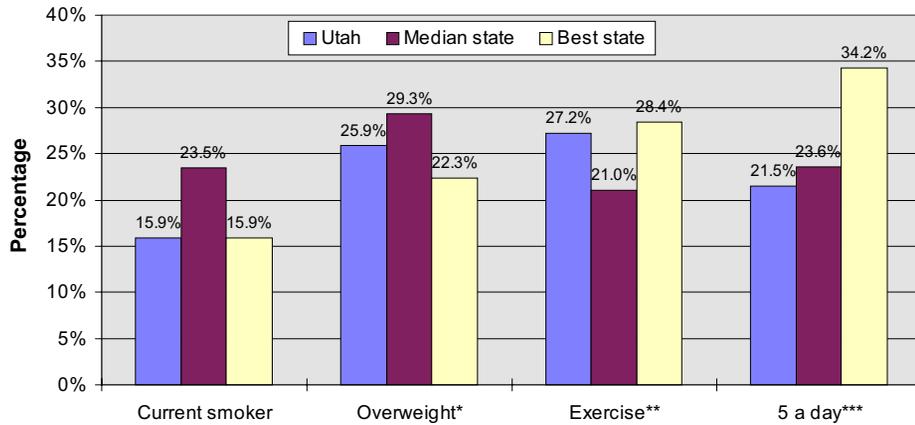


Percentage who reported *exercise 5+ times per wk, 30 min per time, **eating a low fat diet, and ***eating 5 or more servings of fruits or vegetables per day, according to whether they indicated *exercise or ***a healthy diet was important for their health.

Utahns have lower death rates for many chronic diseases than elsewhere in the United States. Healthy behaviors, especially avoiding tobacco use, contribute to the good health of Utahns. However, Utahns have substantial room for improvement in other areas, such as diet and exercise. Utahns are generally aware of the importance of chronic diseases and of the health behaviors that are most important to prevent those diseases. However, knowledge alone is not enough. Many Utahns are not taking advantage of proven ways to improve their health, despite that knowledge.

Health Behaviors in Utah

Percentage of Utah adults (age 18 or over) who reported selected health behaviors, Utah, median state rate, and best state rate, 1996.



* Overweight based on body mass index (males 27.7, females 27.3)

** Exercise indicates 5+ times per week for >30 minutes at any intensity.

*** Five servings of fruits/vegetables per day.

Methods:

The data for this report came primarily from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). BRFSS is an ongoing survey of health behaviors of Utah adults (age 18 and over). It is supported by CDC and conducted in all states.

For this study, six additional questions were added to the BRFSS interviews conducted during April through June of 1996. The interview results from 717 individuals were weighted to the age and sex distribution of Utah adults in 1996.

For more information on BRFSS, contact John Librett at 538-6263.

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Additional information about this topic is available from the Bureau of Chronic Disease Prevention and Control, Utah Department of Health, P O Box 142107, Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-2107, (801) 538-6186, FAX (801) 538-9495, or email: llarsen@doh.state.ut.us or from the Office of Public Health Data, (801) 538-6108, FAX (801) 538-7053, or email: phdata@doh.state.ut.us.



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