

[County Health Rankings Released](#)

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute recently released the results of the County Health Rankings study. The study looks at the health of the residents of each county by state, so that only Missouri counties may be compared to other Missouri counties. The Missouri rankings are here: <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/missouri>.

As shown on the map, Jefferson County is in the first tier of the rankings for health outcomes, ranking 28th out of Missouri's 114 counties. However, in terms of health factors, those things that lead to health outcomes, Jefferson County ranked much lower, falling to 67th of the 114 counties.

<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/missouri/health-factors-map>

This information was not new to the Jefferson County Health Department. The JCHD collects and analyzes very similar information and has used it to develop programs such as our Tobacco Control efforts to address high adult tobacco use rates in Jefferson County, and our support of community coalitions like Get Healthy DeSoto!, and Get Fit Festus! to reduce obesity and encourage more physical exercise in communities.

Specific information about the health outcomes and factors of Jefferson County residents can be found here: <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/missouri/jefferson>.

When these specific health factors are reviewed, it becomes clear that many things affect the public's health beyond what we think of as the responsibility of a "public health department". For example, the high school graduation rate in Jefferson County is 83%, slightly higher than the state average of 81%. However, the percent of the population in Jefferson County that have a four year college degree is 12%, much lower than the state rate of 22%. The relationship between higher education and improved health outcomes is well known, with years of formal education correlating strongly with improved work and economic opportunities, reduced mental and social stress, and healthier lifestyles. But what isn't known is why we graduate from high school better than the state, but have such a low percentage of college graduates who return to live here.

For these reasons, it will take this health department working with many different partners in the community, to improve the health of our residents over time.

