

SCGOVHEALTH

Sarasota County Health Department | Florida Department of Health
scgov.net | 941-861-5000 | Comcast 19/Verizon 32

March 30, 2011

Media contact: Dianne Shipley, 941-861-2852; cell 941-302-1058;
Dianne_Shipley@doh.state.fl.us

Report released today on Sarasota County health ranking

Today, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and University of Wisconsin released the 2011 County Health Ranking report. The first report that ranks counties nationwide on health outcomes and health behaviors was published last year. This year's report is available for viewing on www.countyhealthrankings.org.

"We were pleased that Sarasota County's health ranking was stable compared to last year. This overall fourth-place ranking among Florida's 67 counties affirms that Sarasota County is a great place to live," says Sarasota County Health Department Acting Administrator Barbara Laidlaw.

The 2011 County Health Rankings also showed that Sarasota County had an increase in unemployment.

This year -- access to recreational facilities -- was added as a measure of the health of our physical environment. Sarasota County ranked ninth in Florida in that category. This reinforces the variety of outdoor venues available to residents and visitors year-round. These include the 34 miles of gulf [beaches](#) as well as 109 athletic fields, 16 recreation and community centers and more than 200 [parks](#), including Oscar Scherer and Myakka River State Parks. [The Legacy Trail](#), which stretches more than 10 miles from just south of the city of Sarasota to Venice, is one of the county's major amenities.

Many partnerships are in place to promote healthy active lifestyles among people of all ages. The Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP) has worked with Sarasota District Schools and others to increase physical activity among school-age children through the [The Walking School Bus](#). The group also developed [SRQ Kids 4 Health : Fitness Resources](#) as a resource for parents, teachers and interested residents. Sarasota County Health Department and Sarasota County Parks and Recreation launched [Pathways To Health](#) to provide people of all ages access to safe, marked trails in locations across the county.

The 2011 County Health Ranking report also revealed an area that health and law enforcement officials and community leaders have been working to address. According to the 2011 report, Sarasota County ranks 13th in mortality or premature deaths, compared to its eighth ranking last year. The measure used here is the number of years of potential life lost among those under age 75. A leading factor is unintentional injuries. This includes deaths due to motor vehicle accidents and unintentional poisoning. In other studies, prescription drugs accounted for 86 percent of drugs identified as a cause of death by the District 12 medical examiner in 2009. Younger people are disproportionately affected. Local efforts are in place to address this issue on many fronts through [Drug Free Sarasota](#).

For more information about the local health rankings, call 941-861-2852.

-end-