



State of the County Health Report

2024

Leading Causes of Death (2018-2022)

1. Heart Disease
2. Cancer
3. Other Unintentional injuries
4. COVID-19
5. Cerebrovascular Disease
6. Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases
7. Diabetes
8. Alzheimer's Disease
9. Motor Vehicle Injuries
10. Nephritis, Nephrotic Syndrome, & Nephrosis

Source: NC State Center
for Health Statistics



The state of NC along with the NC Local Health Department Accreditation program requires local health departments to conduct a comprehensive Community Health Assessment (CHA) every 3-4 years. The most recent Harnett County Community Health Assessment was conducted in 2022. The 2024 **State of the County's Health Report** is compiled to provide updates related to the Community Health Assessment and the work surrounding our health priorities. The health priorities as identified by county residents, include **Chronic Disease Prevention** and **Substance Abuse/Overdose Prevention**. This report provides an overview and update for the selected health priorities, changes in mortality and morbidity data since the CHA, information on emerging issues, and details on any new initiatives.

Priority: Chronic Disease Prevention

Chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes are the leading causes of death and disability in the United States (CDC). Many chronic diseases are caused by key risk behaviors. By making healthy choices, you can reduce your likelihood of getting a chronic disease and improve your quality of life.

- **Diabetes** is the **7th** leading cause of death (age-adjusted) in Harnett County.

Lifestyle changes can help prevent the onset of type 2 diabetes, the most common form of the disease. The Health Department in partnership with FirstHealth continues to provide the Diabetes Prevention Program, PreventT2. The Prevent Type 2 Diabetes(T2) Lifestyle Change Program is part of the NC Minority Diabetes Prevention Program. PreventT2 is a yearlong lifestyle change program for those with prediabetes or at high risk for diabetes. A Lifestyle Coach works with participants for one year. Program participants are prediabetic or determined to be at-risk for diabetes through a blood test and/or risk assessment.

Progress: The Health Department continues to provide this program and conducted sessions April 2023-March 2024.

- Approximately 50% of class participants were ethnic and racial minorities.
- Seven out of the 8 (88%) participants lost weight by the conclusion of the program.

If you have prediabetes, losing a small amount of weight if you're overweight and getting regular physical activity can lower your risk for developing type 2 diabetes.

Go Red Lunch & Learn. February is American Heart Month, a time to increase awareness of **heart disease**. In recognition of American Heart Month, Harnett County Health Department and Cape Fear Valley Harnett Healthcare partnered to offer the Go Red Lunch and Learn on Tuesday, February 13, 2024, in the Government Complex Commons Area in Lillington. Dr. Sirishia Reddy and Dr. Amol Bahekar, cardiologists with Cape Fear Valley Heart and Vascular Specialists provided presentations on heart disease and ways to reduce your risk. Participants had the opportunity to visit health related exhibits and enjoy a heart healthy lunch.



Cancer ranks as the second leading cause of death in Harnett County and North Carolina.



The Health Department in partnership with Rex Mobile Mammography provides access to screenings. A mammogram is an X-ray picture of the breast. Doctors use a mammogram to look for early signs of breast cancer. Although breast cancer screening cannot prevent breast cancer, it can help find breast cancer early, when it is easier to treat.

Progress: In 2024, the Health Department provided 10 screenings with 132 women screened.

- 64% of the women screened were ethnic and racial minorities.
- 30% of the total women screened were uninsured.
**Funding assistance is provided for women who are uninsured and meet program criteria through Rex Mammography Assistance program.*
- 88% of the women kept their screening appointment.

Priority: Overdose Prevention

Opioid overdoses have become a significant public health issue in Harnett County.

- The overdose death rate in Harnett County was **45.9 out of 100,000** residents in 2023, representing **65 people who died of an overdose**. This rate is among the highest rates seen in NC.
- In 2024, there were **154** Emergency Department visits for overdose involving medications or drugs with dependency potential. This is decrease compared to 2023 in which there were **256** Emergency Department visits.

Naloxone is a life-saving medication that can reverse an overdose from opioids—including heroin, fentanyl, and prescription opioid medications—when given in time. In 2024, Harnett County Health Department distributed a total of **1,230 naloxone kits** to individuals and community partners.

Emerging Issues:

H5 Avian Flu. H5 Avian flu is widespread in wild birds worldwide and is causing outbreaks in poultry and U.S. dairy cows with several recent human cases in U.S. dairy and poultry workers. Due to outbreaks in domestic commercial and backyard poultry flocks, and infections in wild birds and some mammals, some groups of people with job-related or recreational exposures to birds or other H5 virus-infected animals, are at greater risk of infection.

In 2024, a special program made free seasonal flu vaccines available to farm workers in 12 states including North Carolina affected by H5 bird flu outbreaks in animals. Seasonal flu vaccine does not protect against H5 bird flu, however increasing seasonal flu vaccination among farm workers can prevent severe illness and help reduce the strain of the flu season on health care systems. Harnett County Health Department worked with local farmers to provide flu vaccines.

Cyberterrorism. Harnett County Health Department conducted a Jurisdictional Risk Assessment in 2024. A jurisdictional risk assessment (JRA) is a process in which a jurisdiction works through a process to determine a ranking of hazards based on the likelihood of them occurring and the level of impact that each hazard would have on that jurisdiction. Cyberterrorism was identified among the top 5 hazards identified for Harnett County Health Department. Cyberterrorism is the intentional disruption of the internet, or the systems needed to operate critical infrastructure, including information systems, technology, programmable electronic devices, networks, hardware, software, and data. Within the past few years, multiple county governments have had some level of cyberterrorism causing impacts ranging from minimal to severe with major data loss. Harnett County Health Department works with Harnett County Information Technology to provide guidance in the event of cyberterrorism.

New Initiatives:

Community Naloxone Training: Harnett County Health Department worked with community partners to provide community naloxone trainings. Naloxone trainings included information on overdose prevention, how to administer naloxone, and how to care for the individual until emergency services arrive.

Trainings were conducted at various community sites throughout Harnett County such as barbershops, churches, and other community sites.



Harnett County's first BHUC: Behavioral Health Urgent Care: Alliance Health, Daymark Recovery Services, Good Hope Hospital Inc., and Harnett County Government are collaborating to enhance healthcare in Harnett County by launching expanded mental health services aligned with national models and trends. The partnership aims to improve on-demand access to behavioral health care, strengthen existing services and improve the health and wellbeing of Harnett County residents. Daymark opened Harnett County's first behavioral health urgent care – a 24/7/365, walk-in, crisis-focused service in February 2025.

Sharps Disposal Kiosk: In the United States, about 8 million people use sharps, or needles, syringes, and lancets, at home each year. Improper disposal of sharps can lead to needle stick injuries. Needle stick injuries can expose people to infectious diseases like Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and HIV.

Used sharps left loose among other waste can hurt sanitation workers during collection rounds, at sorting and recycling facilities, and at landfills. Children, adults, and even pets are also at risk for needle-stick injuries when sharps are disposed improperly at home or in public settings. Needle-stick injuries are a preventable health risk.

Due to the hazards that unsafe disposal practices present, in 2024 Harnett County Health Department secured a sharps disposal container. The sharps container is located in the front lobby of the Health Department. Residents can dispose of needles and other sharps Monday-Friday between the hours of 8:00am-5:00pm.



The 2024 State of the County Health Report will be disseminated to key stakeholders and community partners including the Board of Health, and others. To learn about public health services and programs in Harnett County visit our web site www.harnett.org/health or call 910-893-7550.

Copies of this report can be viewed and downloaded from the Health Department's website.

