



Nebraska's Women's Health Report Card--2006

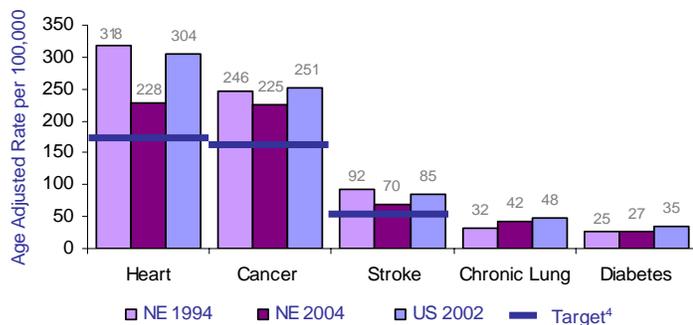
Focus on Preventing Chronic Disease

Who are the women of Nebraska?

Fifty-one percent of the 1.7 million people who live in Nebraska are women and girls.¹ Nebraska ranks third in the nation for the percentage of women in the work force.² Nebraska women's lives are productive and busy, whether they work inside or outside the home. Nebraska women live an average of 81 years³, but spend many of those years dealing with chronic disease such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer.

How healthy are the women of Nebraska?

Leading Chronic Disease Deaths Among Women 25 and Older
Nebraska, 1994, 2004 and US, 2002

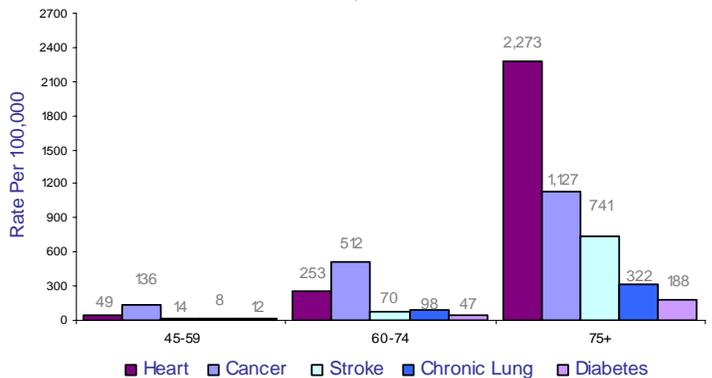


Nebraska women die from chronic diseases over all the age spans. Overall, heart disease is the number one killer of women both in Nebraska and the United States, while cancer is a close second. Between 1994 and 2004 heart disease deaths among Nebraska women decreased significantly with a smaller decrease in cancer and stroke deaths. There was a slight increase in deaths from chronic lung disease and diabetes.

Source: NE Vital Records, National Center for Health Statistics Compressed Mortality File, and US Census Bureau

In Nebraska cancer is the major cause of death due to chronic illness until age 75 (although, accidents cause more deaths to women age 20-44). At age 75, heart disease skyrockets as a cause of mortality.

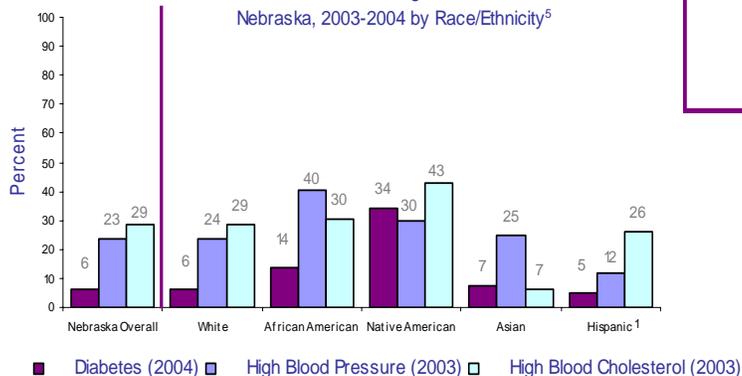
Leading Chronic Disease Deaths Among Women
45 and Older, by Age Groups
Nebraska, 2002-2004



Source: NE Vital Records and US Census Bureau 2002-2004

Diabetes is a major contributor to heart disease and stroke mortality, as are high blood pressure and high cholesterol. In 2003, just over 6% of Nebraska women reported having diabetes. Heart disease, stroke, and diabetes take an especially high toll on Nebraska women of color.

Selected Self-Reported Health Status of
Nebraska Women Age 18 and Older
Nebraska, 2003-2004 by Race/Ethnicity⁵



Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

¹ U.S Census Bureau, American FactFinder; 2000

² Institute for Women's Policy Research; *The Status of Women in the States*, 2004

³ Nebraska Health and Human Services System: Vital Statistics Report, 2003.

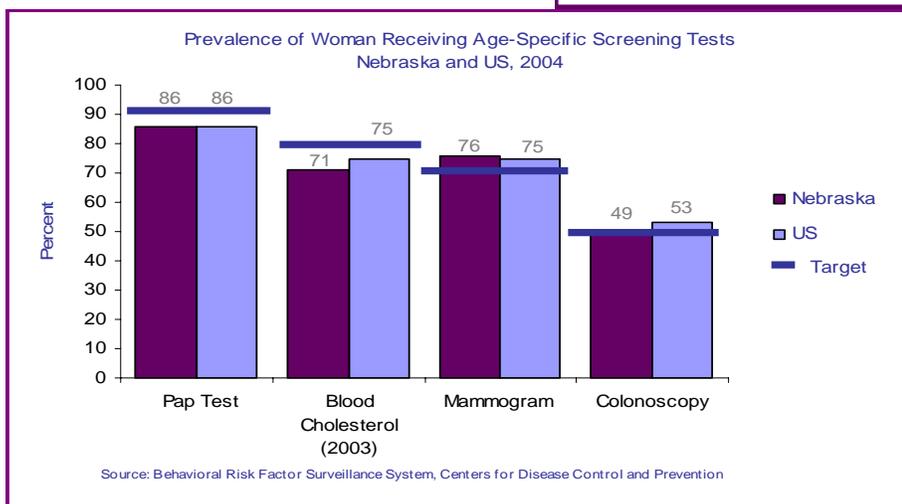
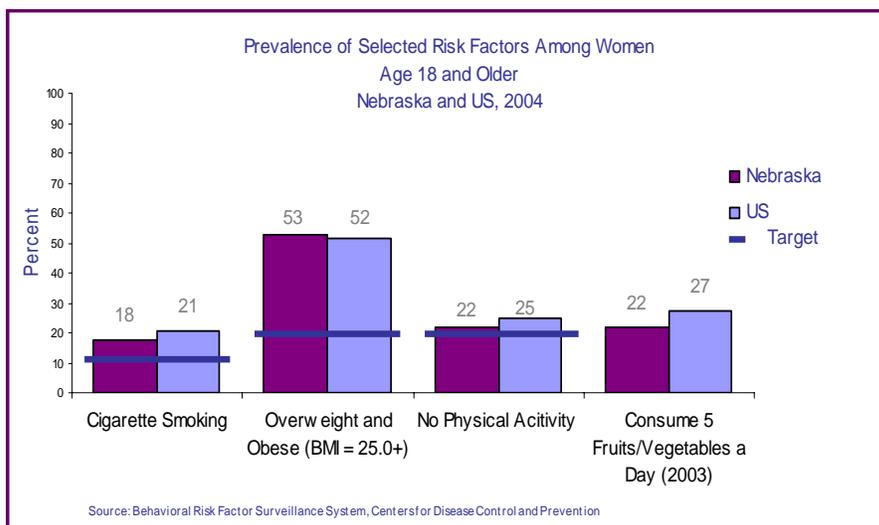
⁴ Healthy People 2010 Objectives for the Nation; see www.healthypeople.gov for further explanation

⁵ Hispanic ethnicity can be of any race.

⁶ Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2004

What practices can help Nebraska women live longer, healthier lives?

Smoking, obesity, and overweight increase the likelihood of chronic diseases and shortened life spans. Since 1994 Nebraska women had a 27% increase in overweight and obesity, with the increase primarily in the obese population. Good nutrition, physical activity, and maintenance of recommended weight contribute to longer, healthier lives.



There are set screening tests for women of all ages. All adult women should follow screening guidelines for Pap tests, and women in their 20's should begin discussing cholesterol screening with their health care provider. Screening for breast and colon cancer should start in the middle years.

What more do women in Nebraska need to be healthy?

Optimal health for Nebraska women requires action at three levels:

- 1) Individual women and their families—Following good health habits is easier when women receive encouragement from family and friends.
- 2) Medical providers and the health care system—Studies show that women are more likely to engage in good prevention practices when their doctors or other health professionals encourage them. In order to have that support, women also need access to quality health services at times that are convenient to their lives.
- 3) Communities and society—Health insurance is important to assuring access; 12% of Nebraska women (age 18-64) have no health insurance.⁶ Nebraska ranks 16th in the nation for women with health insurance. Smoke-free environments are also important to good health. In addition, women are much more likely to engage in physical activity if communities provide safe and convenient places to exercise.