

**Deputy Chief Medical Officer's Report
to the State Board of Health
September 2008**

Colon Cancer Screening Campaign

DHHS and other partners kicked off a special promotional campaign at Memorial Stadium in Lincoln last month, targeting Nebraska men and women over 50 who haven't been screened for colon cancer.

The new campaign features Jerry Tagge, Nebraska's All-American quarterback in 1970-71, as the campaign spokesperson. Johnny Rodgers, Heisman trophy winner in 1972, will be featured on gas pump toppers at 13 gas stations in north Omaha, with tear-offs containing information about how to enroll in the program online or by toll-free number. DHHS is placing special emphasis on north Omaha because mortality due to colon cancer is significantly higher for African Americans. The mortality rate for African Americans in 1996-2005 was 30.8 cases per 100,000 population. For whites, it was 20.9.

Enrollees in the program will be eligible for prizes. Winners of random drawings will get some type of sports memorabilia if they can show they have been screened (a certificate signed by Tagge, Rodgers or Tom Osborne) or tickets for basketball and baseball games.

The campaign will include print, TV and radio ads. The print ads will feature Tagge in a vintage photo running with the ball, "staying in the game." Radio and TV ads will be used in pre- and post-game shows. Radio ads will feature either Tagge or Jim Rose from Husker Sports Network.

Nebraska has one of the lowest screening rates in the country. Approximately 920 new diagnoses and 350 deaths occurred in Nebraska last year.

Colon cancer is the second leading cause of cancer-related death (after lung cancer) in the U.S. Regular colon cancer screening can make a dramatic difference.

The partners, in addition to DHHS: Nebraska Medical Association, American Cancer Society, Nebraska CARES (Cancer Awareness, Research, Education and Service—a coalition of over 100 associations and individuals addressing cancer), and the Husker Sports Network.

For more information on the DHHS colon cancer screening program, see the Web site at www.dhhs.ne.gov and search for "colon cancer."

Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Grant

Last month, the nonprofit Trust for America's Health released a report, "F as in Fat: How Obesity Policies are Failing in America 2008."

The report found that obesity rates increased in 37 states in the past year, with more than 25 percent of adults obese in 28 states, up from 19 states last year. Obesity rates have doubled since 1980, from 15 percent to 30 percent, and two-thirds of U.S. adults are now considered overweight or obese. In Nebraska, the obesity rate is 26.5 percent.

In July, the state was one of 23 states to receive funding from CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity. The DHHS Nutrition and Activity for Health *Prevention Works* will receive \$726,953 annually for the next five years (July 2008 - June 2013).

The principal target areas are to:

- Increase physical activity.
- Increase consumption of fruits and vegetables.
- Decrease sugar-sweetened beverage consumption.
- Increase breastfeeding initiation, duration and exclusivity.
- Reduce high energy dense food consumption.
- Decrease television viewing.

The three goals to address the principal target areas are:

- Improve state and local capacity supporting nutrition, physical activity, and obesity initiatives.
- Implement the Nebraska Physical Activity and Nutrition State Plan.
- Evaluate and monitor nutrition, physical activity, and obesity prevention interventions and outcomes.

The purpose the grant is to improve healthful eating and physical activity to prevent and control obesity and chronic diseases by building and sustaining statewide capacity, and implementing population-based strategies and interventions.

This could range from encouraging more farmers markets, fostering an environment that encourages physical activity with walking trails, and studying ways to improve walking and biking routes for children.

Vital Statistics Report 2006

In 2006, the number of resident live births in the state increased for the 11th time in the last 12 years, reaching its highest level since 1982. A total of 26,723 live births were recorded among Nebraska women in 2006, compared to 26,142 the year before. Nebraska's increasing number of live births is largely the result of a surge in the number of live births within the state's Hispanic population.

There were 14,894 deaths among Nebraskans in 2006, a decrease from 2005. The average age at death was 75.1 years, a slight drop from the previous year's figure of 75.2 years. (The state's all-time record is 75.5 years in 2003.) By gender, the average age at death in 2006 was 78.8 years for Nebraska women, which represents an increase from the 2005 mark of 78.6 years and is now the state's all-time record. For men, the average age at death was 71.1 years, which represents a decrease from 71.6 years in 2005.

In 2006, there were 148 infant deaths, resulting in a rate of 5.5 deaths per 1,000 live births, down slightly from 5.6 the year before. This compares to a national infant mortality rate for 2005 (the latest year available) of 6.8 deaths per 1,000 live births.

The leading cause of death was heart disease (3,444). This figure represents just under one-fourth (23 percent) of all deaths that occurred among Nebraska residents in 2006. Since the beginning of this decade, the state's heart disease mortality has dropped by nearly 18 percent.

With just 18 fewer deaths than heart disease, cancer was the second leading cause of death among Nebraska residents, responsible for 3,426 deaths. Cancer of the lung was the leading cause of cancer deaths, followed by colorectal cancer. However, breast cancer was the second leading cause of cancer deaths among women, claiming 213 lives. This is the state's lowest annual number of breast cancer deaths since 1967. After lung and colorectal cancer, prostate cancer was the number three cause of cancer deaths among Nebraska men. Taken together, these four sites were responsible for almost half (49.1 percent) of the state's cancer deaths in 2006.

After heart disease and cancer, the leading causes of death were cerebrovascular, chronic lung disease, accidents, Alzheimer's disease, diabetes mellitus, pneumonia, nephritis and nephrosis, and suicide.

See attachments for number of deaths per leading cause of death, by gender and by age groups.

The Vital Statistics Report can be found at www.dhhs.ne.gov under "Statistics and Reports."