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Yolo County Health Department
137 N. Cottonwood St.
Woodland, CA 95695

www.yolohealth.org

Main phone (530) 666-8645 or (916) 375-6380
Public Health Lab (530) 666-8644
Environmental Health (530) 666-8646

This report would not have been possible without the assistance and support of the following individuals.

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Ada Barros Heiser, MPH | Joseph P. Iser, MD, DrPH, MSc |
| Beth Gabor | Linda Uno |
| Bruce Sarazin, REHS | Luz Maria Rodriguez |
| Charlene Shon, MPH, RD | Lynne Foster, RN, PHN |
| Cheryl Boney, MPH, RD | Marian Hull |
| Connie Caldwell, MD | Mary Zhu, MD, PhD, MPH |
| Connie Melgoza | Millie You, RN, PHN |
| Dana Carey | Myrna Epstein, PhD, MPH, FPNP |
| Diane Sherwin, RN, PHN | Norma Springsteen |
| Flora Alvarez | Paul Bacigalupi, RN, PHN |
| Gina Harrell, RN, PHN | Rachel Blake |
| Guille Perfino | Rita Cital |
| Jan Babb, RN, PNP | Sandra Delgadillo |
| Janeth Hatanaka | Sharlene Chadwick |
| Jeff Pinnow | Sheila Allen, PhD, RN, PHN |
| Jennifer Sanow | Stanley Kwan |
| Jessica Estrada | Steven Jensen, MPA |
| Joan Beesley, MHSA | Sue Gruwell |
| Joanne Berg | Wayne Taniguchi, REHS |
| Joan Wilson | Zachary Blake |

Edited and Designed by
Tim Wilson, DVM, MPH
Epidemiologist

Photographs—Special Thanks
Andrew Fulks, Dave Feliz, Michal Venera/Yolo Natural Heritage Program, Rita Cital, A Taste of Yolo, Capay Valley Vision, Yolo County Visitors Bureau, Yolo County

Cover Photos
Front: Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, © Dave Feliz; breastfeeding mother/Sonoma County Positive Images of Breastfeeding Contest; sunflower/Rita Cital; grandmother and child/Megan Richmond; tomatoes, melons/A Taste of Yolo; farmer/Yolo Natural Heritage Program; blossoms/Capay Valley Vision; child/Yolo County WIC Program; Camp Putah campers/Yolo County
Inside Front/Back: Sunflower field 2009 near C.R. 102, courtesy Rita Cital.
Back: Ireland Ranch, courtesy Andrew Fulks.



Joseph P. Iser, MD, DrPH, MSc
Director – Health Officer

County of Yolo Health Department

137 North Cottonwood Street, Woodland, CA 95695
PHONE - (530) 666-8645 FAX - (530) 666-7337

December 2009

Dear Residents of Yolo County,

Black’s Law Dictionary defines health as a “state of being hale, sound or whole in body, mind, or soul, well-being. Freedom from pain or sickness.” However, the World Health Organization defines “health” as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being—not simply the absence of disease or infirmity.

There are many factors that contribute to the health of Yolo County residents, including those related to the BEINGS model of health: Behavior (smoking, diet), Environment (air pollution, clean water, safe food, sewage sanitation), Immunity (healthy immune system, immunizations), Nutrition (wholesome foods, low in calories and fats), Genetics (many diseases are genetically associated, such as diabetes, heart disease, breast cancer, and many others), and Services (are services that are needed actually available?). Key indicators presented in this Yolo County Health Status Report reflect these factors. Our ability to access true preventive health services is integral to our own health status.

By tracking key indicators of health, the Yolo County Health Department is able to identify threats to the public’s health and determine areas where we are making progress - and where more progress is essential. Improvements in public health occur as a result of changes implemented at every level of society. While public health and medical professionals may lead certain efforts to promote health in Yolo County, all of us - parents, teachers, elected officials, businesses, community leaders, and individual citizens - play an essential role in improving the health of our community.

For example, strategies for confronting our obesity epidemic must address the broad array of forces that contribute to this dangerous trend. While doctors counsel their patients about the risks of being overweight and individuals attempt to eat better and be more physically active, schools can improve access to more nutritious food for students, businesses can allow and encourage employees to engage in physical activity, and local governments and citizens can partner to build more walkable cities, towns, and rural areas. We can all ride our bicycles more.

Yolo County is a growing community with a diversity of ethnicities, income levels, educational levels, professions, and geography. With the strength and commitment of all of us, we can together reshape our communities so that all have the opportunity to maximize their health and well-being.

Sincerely,

Joseph P. Iser, MD, DrPH, MSc
Public Health Officer and Director