



## Public Health Brief

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## What Factors Determine the Health of Residents in Alpine County?

The answer may surprise you. Sure – your diet and exercise may be part of the answer. But apart from genetics, what primarily determines the health of a population are social factors:

- 30% is determined by individual health behaviors, which includes:

- 10% healthy diet and exercise
- 20% behaviors such as smoking, alcohol and drug use, sexually transmitted diseases, and teen birth

- 70% of health outcomes are attributable to socioeconomic factors:

- 20% access to and quality of health care
- 10% the physical environment
- 40% social and economic factors

In other words, the vast majority of factors affecting our collective well-being have nothing to do with food and exercise or with individual behaviors at all – and everything to do with the conditions in which we live.

If you want to explore these ideas, go to:

<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/what-impacts-health/county-health-rankings-model>

To apply the findings of a national study to Alpine County, go to:

<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/health-data/california/alpine?year=2024>

To examine evidence-informed strategies to help create communities where everyone can thrive:

<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/strategies-and-solutions/what-works-for-health/strategies>



**Public Health**

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Alpine County Health Department, 75-B Diamond Valley Rd., Markleeville, CA 96120

Alpine County Board of Supervisors, Phone: (530) 694-2281

District 1: Charles Dobson, District 2: Ron Hames, District 3: Irvin Jim,

District 4: Terry Woodrow, District 5: David Griffith

To look specifically at rural health, go to:

<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/reports/what-works-strategies-improve-rural-health>

How do we in Public Health – and all of us as a community – approach these issues? Go to:

<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/resources/what-works-for-health-shortcut>

We will be using these tools and many others, as well as the Community Health Assessment (CHA) and the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) which many of you participated in, to develop strategies for Alpine County.

We are all in this together. But here are some initial thoughts I have (open to comments!):

- Instead of staying attached to our “wellness culture”, we need to focus and address the social determinants of health. See: <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/beyond-health-care-the-role-of-social-determinants-in-promoting-health-and-health-equity/>

- Mental health and emotional well-being must be a higher priority. See: <https://www.samhsa.gov/public-messages>

- We must learn how to counteract the influence of misinformation (false info) and disinformation (false info with motive) on each of us, including our kids. See: <https://www.apa.org/topics/journalism-facts/misinformation-disinformation>

- We must become better consumers of science – not simply trusting, but verify, verify, verify – and consider the source. See: <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/why-being-anti-science-is-now-part-of-many-rural-americans-identity/>

- We need to unplug and log off. We need time to think and reflect. Social connection is essential for well-being, but so is solitude, especially outdoors. What a better place to find solitude outdoors than Alpine County – one person per square mile! See: <https://www.alpinecounty.com/hiking>  
If you cannot hike, sit and meditate on the beauty surrounding you, and have a heart of gratitude.

- Lack of social connection is a risk factor for both poor physical and mental health, including death! We have a culture of loneliness. There are lots of opportunities in Alpine County to connect. See: <https://www.alpinecountyca.gov/382/Programs-Events>

I invite your thoughts and ideas. Send them to me at [rjohnson@alpinecountyca.gov](mailto:rjohnson@alpinecountyca.gov)

## National Public Health Week

### Protecting, Connecting, and Thriving: We Are All Public Health!



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