

Maine rated as eighth-healthiest state in nation

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PORTLAND, Maine --Maine was ranked as the nation's eighth-healthiest state in a national report released Monday.

America's Health Rankings is issued each year by United Health Foundation with the American Public Health Association and Partnership for Prevention. The report ranks states based on smoking rates, motor vehicle deaths, obesity rates, violent crime, health insurance coverage, poverty rates, public health spending and similar categories.

Maine was ranked in the 10th spot in the 2004 report.

Maine ranked first in the nation in 2005 for its low violent crime rate, and got high marks for health insurance coverage, prenatal care rates, infant mortality, a low rate of cardiovascular deaths and a low incidence of infectious disease. It got low marks for its high obesity rate, high incidence of cancer deaths and high number of limited activity days.

The report said Maine had experienced significant changes in the past year that were both good and bad. The prevalence of smoking declined 12 percent in the past year, the report said, while the obesity rate increased by 17 percent.

In the long term, the report said Maine's infant mortality rate has fallen by 39 percent since 1990, and the percentage of children living in poverty has declined by 35 percent. The state's teen pregnancy rate fell nearly 42 percent between 1991 and 2002, the report said.

Minnesota was ranked as the healthiest state, with Vermont ranked second and New Hampshire third. Utah, Hawaii, North Dakota and Connecticut were rated in the four through seven spots.

Mississippi was named the least healthy state, with Louisiana, Tennessee, South Carolina and Arkansas rounding out the bottom five.

On the Net:

United Health Foundation: <http://www.unitedhealthfoundation.org/shr2005/pdf/Maine.pdf> ■