Leading Causes of Premature Death and Preventable Illness In Santa Barbara County

The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department is releasing the 2011 Community Health Status Report with information about the leading causes of death and disease among Santa Barbara County residents on its website Friday, April 15. The purpose of the report is to inform community leaders, local professionals, and the general public so they can take appropriate actions that support longer healthier lives.

Dr. Takashi Wada, Director of Public Health, and Health Officer for Santa Barbara County explained, “Collecting data and analyzing trends gives us a better understanding of where we are and how we, as a community and as the Public Health Department, should focus our attention and resources.”

The Report examines the 2,917 deaths that occurred in 2008 in Santa Barbara County. Half of these deaths were caused by heart disease and cancer. Heart disease was the leading cause of death, stroke was the 2nd leading cause of death, and lung cancer was the 3rd leading cause of death for all residents.

The Report also identifies the 15 leading causes of premature death among Santa Barbara County residents during 2008. Over a quarter of all deaths were considered premature, that is, occurred among people under age 75, resulting in over 17,000 years of life lost. The leading cause of premature death is heart disease, as it is for all deaths. The 2nd and 3rd causes of premature death are motor vehicle accidents and accidental drug overdose. Many of the premature deaths were associated with preventable illness or injury based on unhealthy behaviors.

Obesity posed the greatest threat to the health and lives of the largest number of County residents. Obesity-related illness such as heart disease stroke, hypertension, diabetes, and various cancers contributed to hundreds of deaths, and thousands of years of life lost to premature death.

The Report provides information about the characteristics of Santa Barbara County residents, the leading causes of death and premature death along with information about cancer, communicable diseases, accidents, suicide, and maternal and child health. The report is available on the Public Health Department website at: www.sbcphd.org or through a direct link http://countyofsfb.org/phd/epi.aspx?id=31714