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**NATIONWIDE REPORT SHOWS WESTCHESTER BETTER THAN
NEW YORK STATE AVERAGE IN KEY HEALTH INDICATORS**

According to a newly released report by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Westchester County residents fare better than average among residents of New York State on several key indicators of health. These include lower than average prevalences of obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure among adults, as well as a lower than average number of residents reporting “fair to poor” health.

The CDC report is based on 2005 data collected by its *Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System*, which measures the extent to which populations are at risk of health conditions related to controllable behaviors. Compared with averages for New York State, the report showed significantly lower percentages of Westchester adult residents:

- are obese (15.4% of Westchester residents compared with 22.3% of all New York State residents);
- have been diagnosed with diabetes (3.2% Westchester, 8.1% New York);
- have high blood pressure (20.0% Westchester, 26.2% New York);
- require the use of special equipment due to health (3.6% Westchester, 6.4% New York);
- self-report own health status as fair or poor (11.4% Westchester, 16.9% New York);
- report engaging in no leisure-time physical activity in the past month (19.5% Westchester, 27.1% New York).

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“Given the fact that affluence and a high level of education generally go hand-in-hand with good health outcomes, we are not surprised to see Westchester doing so well in comparison with some other parts of the State,” said Westchester County Health Commissioner Dr. Joshua Lipsman. “However, we certainly do not take this for granted. There are segments of the population in Westchester that do not fully share the bounty of health that many of us enjoy.”

In recent years, the Westchester County Health Department has placed a high priority on preventing chronic diseases among residents by encouraging healthy lifestyles. The County’s Be Fit Westchester Program was established to reduce the prevalence of obesity, which has been shown to increase the risk of many chronic diseases, including heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. Be Fit Westchester recently unveiled a new Walking Works initiative aimed at encouraging employee wellness programs, such as lunch-time walking clubs. The Be Fit Program recently issued the Mayor’s and Supervisor’s Community Health Challenge, which partners with municipal governments to promote physical activity opportunities for residents.

The Be Fit Program has also reached out to Westchester restaurateurs to discourage the use of cooking oils that contain trans fats. To date, over 400 restaurants have signed on as “Be Fit Restaurants” by pledging to use healthier cooking oils.

The County has also been working with schools to encourage children to be more physically active through the Fit Kids Program. Earlier this year 25,000 Westchester school children participated in No junk Food Week sponsored by Fit Kids.

The Fit Kids Program recently partnered with local elementary schools on the Body Mass Index Screening Project. This project is enabling the Westchester County Health Department to more accurately estimate the number of school-aged children in the County who are overweight, or at risk of becoming so, and to determine whether there are differences by school grade and gender.

Cardiovascular disease, which includes heart disease and stroke, is the nation’s number one killer. Physical inactivity significantly increases the risk of heart disease and stroke, as well as Type 2 diabetes. Brisk walking for as little as 30 minutes per day has been shown to result in benefits to heart health and improvement in levels of good HDL cholesterol.

For more information, please call the Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 813-5000 or visit the Health Department website at www.westchestergov.com/health.