



The Web Site of The Sacramento Bee

This story is taken from [Sacbee](#) / [Opinion](#).

Editorial: A 'Healthy Living Map'

Check out your ZIP code for health status

-
Published 12:00 am PST Monday, November 5, 2007

To many Californians, the debate over health care may seem arcane and remote, especially when folks throw out terms like "individual mandate" and "guaranteed issue."

Yet at its heart, this debate involves everyday questions for regular people: How can I gain access to health insurance? How can I help my child avoid diabetes? Why are there no clinics in my neighborhood? Why are the emergency rooms so full?

Here in Sacramento, health professionals have long known about these disparities. Now their findings are drawing a wider audience. Thanks to a project of computerized mapping, Sacramento-area residents can go to the Web and see how their neighborhood stacks up in measurements of health and access to medical care.

Go to www.healthlivingmap.com and click on the ZIP code map. Soon you'll see the region. By clicking on various indicators of health, you can see which areas have the largest percentage of residents afflicted by obesity, diabetes, cancer deaths and other fatal illnesses.

Then click on "ER visits," and you'll see a map of the number of emergency-room, outpatient visits by residents of that area. Not surprisingly, the ZIP code 98614 has a high percentage of ER visits, possibly because this section of downtown Sacramento has a large concentration of homeless people and residents without health insurance.

Known as the "Healthy Living Map," the project is a collaboration of four nonprofit providers – Catholic Health Care West, Sutter Health, Kaiser Permanente and UC Davis Health System. Every three years, those hospitals are required to develop a "community needs assessment." Usually the assessments end up in a binder. This year, the four hospitals agreed to create a Web version with the help of a community group, Valley Vision.

Be careful not to draw broad conclusions. Health data can be misleading. But the maps are a good place to start asking questions. The biggest one is: How long must we wait for health care reform?

Go to: [Sacbee](#) / [Back to story](#)

This article is protected by copyright and should not be printed or distributed for anything except personal use.
The Sacramento Bee, 2100 Q St., P.O. Box 15779, Sacramento, CA 95852
Phone: (916) 321-1000

Copyright © [The Sacramento Bee](#)