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Florida No. 1 in heart disease hospitalizations

South Florida about average in heart risks

By Bob LaMendola, Sun Sentinel

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Florida leads the nation in the number of seniors hospitalized with heart disease, a federal report found Monday, reflecting the state's large elderly population and higher-than-average heart risks.

More than 1.1 million Floridians were admitted with heart ailments between 2000 and 2006, far above second-ranked Texas with 980,000 and most populated California with 877,000, said the report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The most worrisome aspect of the report for Florida was extent of heart disease among the state's 3.4 million seniors, said Michele Casper, a CDC epidemiologist who headed the report.

Nearly 80 Florida seniors per 1,000 were hospitalized for heart disease during the study period, compared to about 75 nationwide. That's 15th highest in the country. [Broward County](#) was about average, [Palm Beach County](#) was higher than average. Florida's Panhandle had the highest rates of heart disease in the state.

As in past studies, the highest rates of heart disease were seen in the South and among black Americans. Rates have been inching down among whites and Hispanics but held steady in the black community.

Unhealthy diet and lack of exercise contribute to elevated heart disease, but Casper said other issues also appear in some areas: Less access to healthy foods such as fresh produce, to safe places for exercise, to heart-oriented hospitals and to well-equipped emergency medical care.

"We need to be working ... to create living and working conditions that support equal access to heart disease prevention and treatment," Casper said.

Here are rates of heart disease hospitalizations per 1,000 people (age 65 and up):

Florida: Overall 79.5 per 1,000, whites 78.6, blacks 83.9, Hispanics 78.3.



Nation: Overall 75.2 per 1,000, whites 74.4, blacks 85.3, Hispanics 73.6.

[Broward County](#): Overall 75 per 1000, whites 74, blacks 79, Hispanics 66.

[Palm Beach County](#): Overall 78 per 1000, whites 77, blacks 81, Hispanics 67.

Miami-Dade County: Overall 78 per 1000, whites 75, blacks 87, Hispanics 77.

To see the full report, go to http://www.cdc.gov/DHDSPLibrary/heart_atlas/index.htm or call 800-232-4636.

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