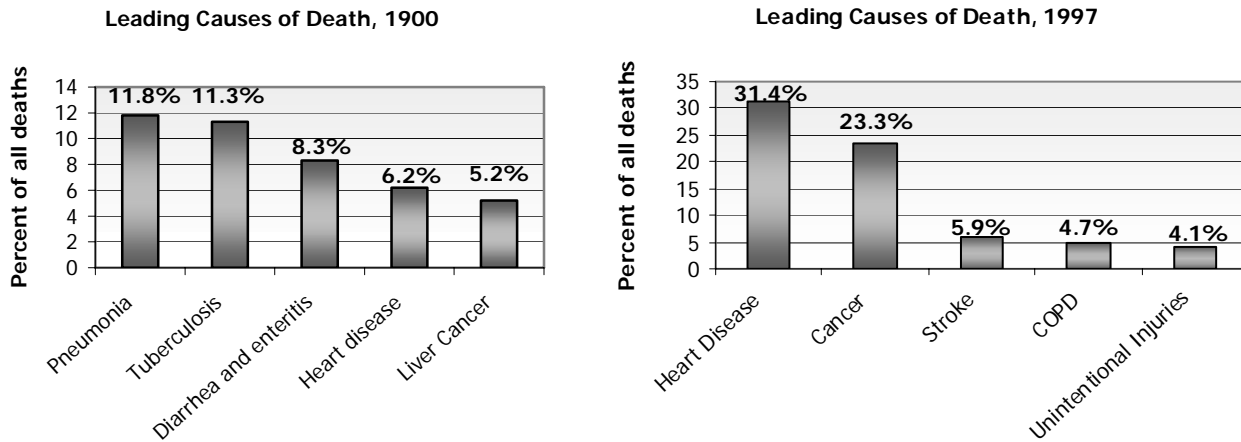


# Why Community Health Education?

## Community-Based Health Education: A key to prevention and early detection

**Situation:** Over the last century, the leading causes of death have shifted from infectious diseases to chronic behavioral oriented types of diseases (Figure 1, Healthy People 2010). The present day leading causes of death (Figure 2) result from lifestyle choices or behaviors; injury, violence, and other factors in the environment; and unavailability or inaccessibility of quality health programs and services.

**Figure 1**



**Figure 2: Leading Causes of Death in Illinois and the United States**

United States, 2001*		Illinois, 2002**	
Heart Disease	696,947	Heart Disease	30,713
Cancer	557,271	Malignant neoplasms	24,671
Stroke	162,672	Cerebrovascular Disease	7,171
COPD	124,816	COPD	4,806
Accidents	106,742	Accidents	4,177
Diabetes	73,249	Diabetes	2,977

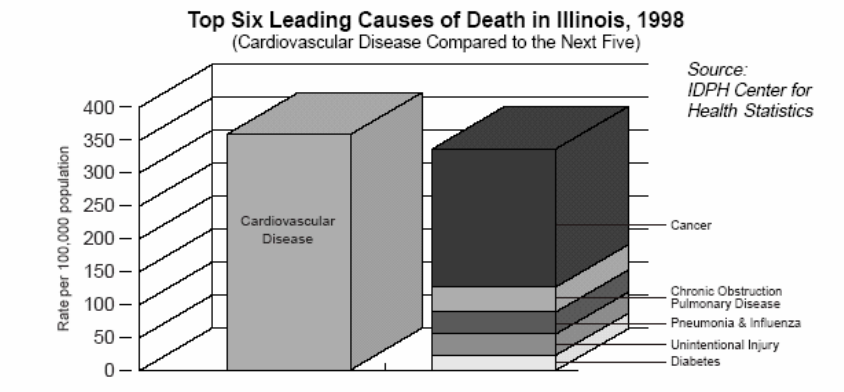
\*CDC National Center for Health Statistics

\*\*Illinois Department of Public Health, Health Statistics

According to the Illinois Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Task Force, 2000:

- Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the leading cause of death in Illinois.
- Each year, more than 42,000 Illinoisans die from CVD.
- Total health care costs for heart disease and stroke in Illinois approach \$4 billion annually
- More than 3.6 million adults in Illinois are categorized as obese

**Figure 3**



**Response:** Chronic diseases are not prevented by vaccines, nor do they just disappear. To a large degree, the major chronic disease killers are an extension of what people do, or not do, as they go about the business of daily living. Health-damaging behaviors—in particular, tobacco use, lack of physical activity, and poor nutrition—are major contributors to heart disease and cancer, our nation’s leading killers. (*CDC, 2005*)

In order to decrease these alarming statistics, prevention and education need to be accessible to all populations. Providing community-based health education enables individuals to modify an unhealthy behavior through behavioral contracts, goal setting, and self-monitoring; to improve and maintain a high quality of life; and assume responsibility of their health. This in turn contributes to a decrease in chronic disease and in health care costs.

## What is Health Education?

“Health education comprises consciously constructed opportunities for learning involving some form of communication designed to improve health literacy, including improving knowledge, and developing life skills which are conducive to individual and community health”

~World Health Organization~

<http://www.who.int/en/>

“Health Education is a process, not a product. It is a series of planned activities directed toward goals, including an array of deliberate experiences that affect the way people think, feel, and act regarding their own health and the health of their communities.”

~Green & Kreuter, 1999~

<http://www.lgreen.net/authors.htm>

## Why Health Education?

Health Education is a fundamental ingredient in the prevention formula and that primary prevention represents the most rational means to controlling health care costs and improving the health of all Americans.

~American Association for Health Education~

<http://www.aahperd.org/aahe/>

## Goals of Health Education

- ✓ The voluntary adoption of behavior conducive to health.
- ✓ To help each person seek that pattern of behavior which moves him toward an optimal level of health and to give him the ability to avoid many of the imbalances, diseases, and accidents of life.

The process of HE goes beyond memorizing information imparted by the educator. Conveying information alone is not sufficient to effect behavior change. Knowledge does not necessarily change attitudes, nor are attitudes always consistent with behavior.

More than knowledge, the process of health education emphasizes skill development, educational standards, community involvement, cultural sensitivity, and behavior change

*~Principles of Health Education & Health Promotion~*  
J. Thomas Butler, 2001

## Responsibilities of a Health Educator

- ✓ Assessing Individual and Community Needs for Health Education
- ✓ Planning Effective Health Education Programs
- ✓ Implementing Health Education Programs
- ✓ Evaluating Effectiveness of Health Education Programs
- ✓ Coordinating Provision of Health Education Services
- ✓ Acting as a Resource Person in Health Education
- ✓ Communicating Health and Health Education Needs, Concerns, and Resources

*~The National Commission for Health Education Credentialing, INC. ~*  
<http://www.nchec.org/aboutnchec/rc.htm>

## Code of Ethics for the Health Education Professional

*~The National Commission for Health Education Credentialing, INC.~*  
<http://www.nchec.org/aboutnchec/ethics.htm>

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