

# Health



“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (World Health Organisation 1946).

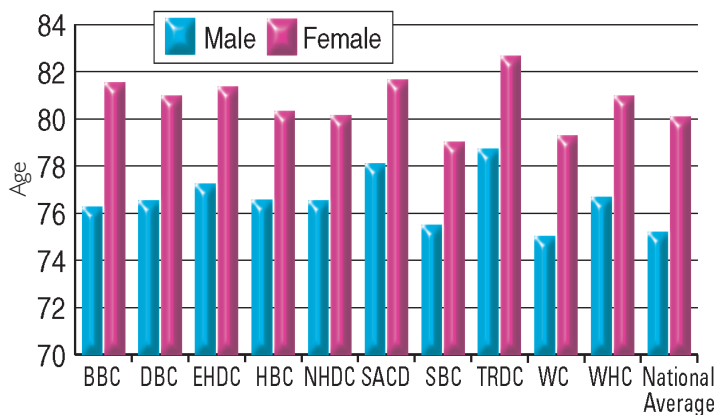
On average, Hertfordshire residents live longer and experience better health than most of the country. Higher than average national incomes allow the majority of residents in Hertfordshire to make healthy choices in terms of diet and other lifestyle factors, and to benefit from access to good jobs, schools, housing and leisure facilities. There are pockets of deprivation in Hertfordshire where inequalities of health come into effect.

The Department of Health consultation paper ‘Tackling Health Inequalities - Consultation on a Plan for Delivery 2001’ sets two new national targets to reduce health inequalities in both infant mortality and life expectancy. The county and district councils, Health Authority and Primary Care Trusts are continually working to improve the health of residents in Hertfordshire; the original Health Improvement Programmes are beginning to show positive results.

## INDICATOR HE1 - Local Health Life Expectancy

Life expectancy in Hertfordshire is high, making it one of the healthiest counties in England. Life expectancy for men is 77 years and 81 years for women, and is continuing to increase for both.

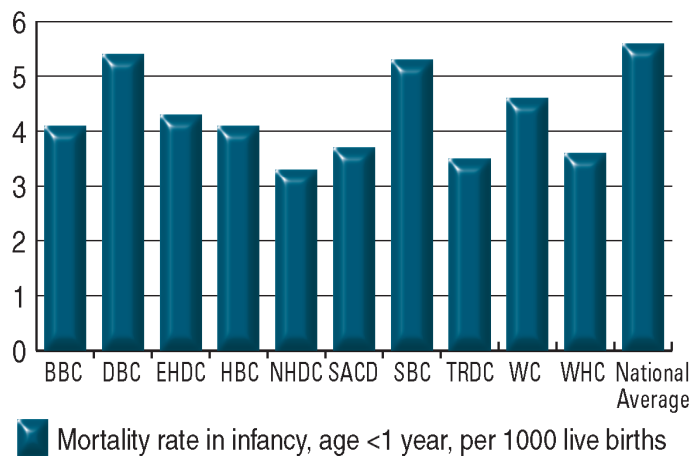
### Life Expectancy in Hertfordshire 2000



The health of children is a particularly useful indicator of where we are and where we want to be. The percentage of the population under 20 years of age in Hertfordshire is 26% and varies from 24% to 29% in different local authorities.

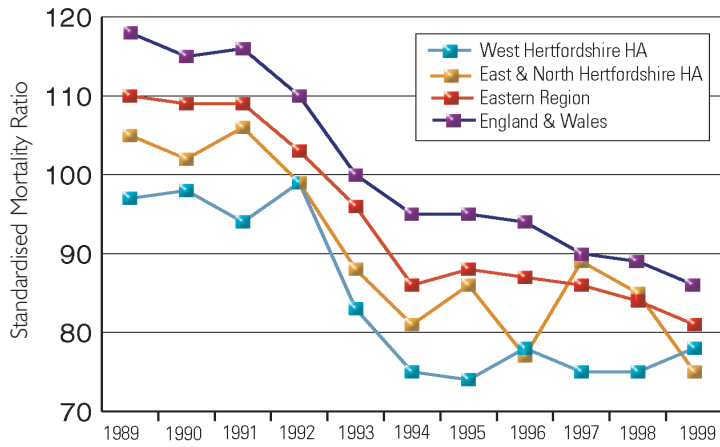
On average Hertfordshire has better baby and infant health than England as a whole. However, some areas have infant mortality rates approaching or even exceeding the national average - Stevenage and Dacorum are of particular concern.

### Infant Mortality Rate by Local Authority 1997-1999



The NHS and local government are addressing the issues of the wider health gap in their determination to achieve their targets for health inequalities. However, over the last ten years, the health of people in Hertfordshire as a whole has improved and the following graph shows an interesting indicator in one specific health area, deaths from strokes.

**Stroke (persons, all ages) Mortality Trend 1989 - 1999**



Source: Public Health Common Dataset 2000  
 Stroke mortality has decreased nationally and in Hertfordshire over the past decade.

The numbers involved are quite small reflecting that

Hertfordshire as a whole has been and is still a good place to live for the sake of your health. Although it would be quite fair to state that health in Hertfordshire is good, there are still differences in health status. We must, however, continue to address health inequalities by dealing with the underlying disadvantages experienced by some groups. Many of the new local Primary Care Trusts are now beginning to address these inequalities by developing sustainable local initiatives which emphasise the importance of reducing both deaths and serious illness from childhood diseases by effective vaccine programmes.

**Further information sources:**

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[www.doh.gov.uk/healthinequalities](http://www.doh.gov.uk/healthinequalities)