

## The Best and Worst Cities For Men

By Heather Loeb, Men's Health

Men's Health

When Brett Favre parted ways with Wisconsin, the oddsmakers figured it'd be a while before cheeseheads had any reason to rejoice. Thing is, Vegas forgot about Madison, a city that's fast becoming Favre-like in its ability to come through in our Big Game: The Best & Worst Cities for Men. This is our eighth annual ranking of the top (and bottom) ZIP codes for enjoying life and avoiding death, and for the second time, Madison emerged victorious.

What types of statistical touchdowns do you need to score to beat 99 other cities? Well, first we calculated critical health data, from the toll taken by heart disease to the damage done by diabetes. Then we crunched the numbers on quality-of-life variables, including crime rates, air quality, and job growth. Finally, we factored in fitness in all its forms, whether it involved barbells or basketballs. All told, we considered 30 different criteria to help us pinpoint the places where it's simply great to be a guy. (As for where women have it good, check out this month's [Women's Health](#) magazine.)

Of course, there's a good chance you don't live in Madison, or Seattle (No. 4) or Boston (No. 9), or any of the other top cities. Not a problem—we stole some of their plays. Now go QB your own life to victory.

### The 10 best

1. Madison, Wis.
2. St. Paul, Minn.
3. Salt Lake City
4. Seattle
5. Aurora, Colo.
6. San Jose, Calif.
7. Lincoln, Neb.
8. San Francisco
9. Boston
10. Minneapolis

### Tips from 5 of the top 10 cities

#### Salt Lake City: Stave off a stroke

Despite the "salt" in its name, the city seems to have tamed high blood pressure and its killer consequence. The secret: Extra-strength exercise: No one spends more time working up a sweat. "Not only is exercise a proven BP-buster, but it also may help quell inflammation in your arteries," says Dan Williams, Ph.D., an exercise physiologist at the University of Utah. And that's important, because blood vessels damaged by inflammation are more prone to the plaque buildup that can raise stroke risk. Too busy to hit the gym: Adopt a dog—brisk walking for 10 minutes, three times a day, may ward off a brain attack.

#### Lincoln, Neb.: Extend your stay on Earth

Cornhuskers are some of the longest-lived people in the nation, in part because they're so darn neighborly. "A key factor to a long, healthy life is a sense of belonging to your community," says John Scheer, Ph.D., an associate professor of nutrition and health sciences at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. In fact, one study found that older people with the strongest social ties were more likely to still be alive 10 years later than those who kept to themselves. If your own ties are frayed (as they often are with men), volunteer for something that'll reconnect you to your town, like coaching T-ball or helping to rehab a park.

#### Seattle: Combat colon cancer

Seattle is kicking colon cancer in the butt—men there have one of the lowest death rates from the disease. And who knows: Maybe it's the milk they put in all that coffee they quaff. Swedish researchers found that men who consumed at least two servings of dairy products daily cut their risk of colon cancer in half. "We think that the calcium and vitamin D in dairy may prevent the growth of precancerous cells in the colon," says William Grady, M.D., chief of

gastroenterology at the University of Washington Medical Center. Reach your quota by downing an 8-ounce glass of milk at breakfast and snacking on a cup of yogurt during the day.

### **Minneapolis: Save gas, save your heart**

Men in Minneapolis are rarely felled by heart disease, and, surprisingly, a city ordinance may be a sign of why. A study in *Circulation* found that when people with heart disease are exposed to polluted air, their odds of an infarction within three hours shoot up by 44 percent. Now consider Minneapolis: The air quality is outstanding, thanks to the city's commitment to clearing the skies. Case in point: Last year, it enacted an ordinance that bans drivers from idling their cars for longer than 3 minutes in an hour. (Sitting with the engine running spews more polluted exhaust than driving for an equivalent amount of time.) Impose your own idling ban, and nudge your gas-guzzling friends and family to do the same.

### **San Francisco: Fill up to slim down**

Rice-A-Roni may be the San Francisco treat, but the locals stay lean by filling their plates with produce instead—few cities consume more fruits and vegetables per capita. "It all comes down to the fiber in produce," says Robert H. Lustig, M.D., a neuroendocrinologist at the University of California at San Francisco. "Fiber prevents insulin levels from spiking after you eat, so you have less insulin available to convert calories to fat." Hit the salad bar accordingly.

#### **The 10 worst**

91. Detroit
92. Jacksonville, Fla.
93. Riverside, Calif.
94. Bakersfield, Calif.
95. Memphis, Tenn.
96. Birmingham, Ala.
97. St. Petersburg, Fla.
98. Las Vegas
99. St. Louis
100. Charleston, W.Va.

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