



# TAKE (GOOD) CARE OF YOUR VOTERS





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## HEALTHY VOTERS LIVE LONGER – and vote more frequently

This brochure will tell you what you as a politician can do to hold on your voters longer, in good health. Older citizens and a bigger pressure on the local authority's finances makes it necessary to think smart about public health.

Good public health creates good quality of life and prosperity. Health problem is costly. A healthy population, on the other hand, is the municipality's most valuable asset. People who thrive and masters everyday life are active contributors to the community.

Healthy voters make healthy choices.

## HOW ARE WE TODAY?

Our modern lifestyle is one of the biggest threats to public health. Research has shown that lack of physical activity increases the risk of [developing] a number of public/national diseases such as overweight and obesity, heart diseases, vascular diseases and diabetes type 2.

World Health Organization has estimated that depression is the diagnosis which is most costly to society. As per today, approximately 8 % of all children and youngsters in Norway suffer from a mental disorder/disease. Mental issues at a young age may become a heavy strain on family and the municipality for a long time, sometimes even for life.

In a global context the health of the Norwegian population is not just good, it is very good. However, statistics show that public health is unevenly distributed throughout the population. Some children are born into society's upper social stratum and can expect a long and healthy life, while other children can expect poor grades at school, problems related to the job market, complex health problems and poor living conditions in socially challenging residential areas.

Strengthening the public health in municipalities is all about putting the effort into where it has the greatest effect.

The coordination reform and the new law of Public Health instructs the municipality to implement the necessary measures to meet challenges related to public health. This may include measures related to childhood environment and living conditions such as housing, education, work and income, physical and social environments, physical activity, nourishment, injuries and accidents, use of tobacco, and use of alcohol and drugs. The municipality shall provide information, advice and guidance on what the individual itself, and the population, can do to promote health and prevent illness. Public Health law kap. 2 §5 and §7.

The county authority needs to have an overview over the standard of health in the region, and influential factors. The county authority will be an initiator on regional partner-operated work. Public Health Lawkap. 4, §20 and §21.

## PREVENT OR TREAT?

There is no way for us to treat our way out of the obesity epidemic. The healthiest and most cost-effective way to go is to prevent. This is the case with most conditions caused by lifestyle. If we want a healthier population we must pay attention to the causes of poor health, and the right measures are usually found outside the health sector. We have to draw our attention towards social living conditions, social networks, residential environment, work, school and education, family and leisure.

Clever public health politicians create a feeling of ownership towards public health matters in every part of the local government administration, they have an interdisciplinary approach and involve both volunteers and private participants in order to create healthy frames for the inhabitants.

There is too much focus on illness and mortality, the municipalities should rather aspire to getting an overview over the good measures for health promotion. The municipalities must improve their documenting measures and the positive influential factors these give. As a politician you are the one who take initiatives. Not only may it save the municipality for expenses, it will also contribute to an increase in the quality of living for those affected. In order to do this you may have to redistribute means from treatment to prevention. This requires political courage! Nobody attends a parade for preventive and health promotional work, and your actions may not prove to be fruitful until after your time in politics. Public health is (equals) community development – think health in everything you do.



70% of the causes of premature death and short life expectancy stem for the most part from lifestyle related diseases. What can be done?

There is a huge difference in life-expectancy in Norway. It is estimated that a person living in the eastern part of Oslo can expect to live 12 years shorter than one living in the western part of Oslo. What can we do about this?



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## THE POLITICIANS DEAL THE CARDS

In order to achieve and maintain good health, the inhabitants must be active in their own lives. Active in this context refers to physically active, mentally active, socially active, and spiritually active, i.e having a purpose in life.

The politicians must also arrange so that the inhabitants can make healthy choices in their everyday life. As a politician you have five trump cards: People chase the things that are cheap, trendy, comfortable, practical, and, for most people, legal (Rose, 1992). With these means you will be able to influence people's behavior. Make it easy to choose healthy.

*”The biggest problem related to intoxication in Norwegian workplaces nowadays is caused by a moderate, yet increasing, alcohol consumption amongst employees. This consumption makes absence increase and productivity fall. [ says dr. psycho Cecilie S. Andreassen from Stiftelsen Bergensklinikkene].*

World Health Organization WHO has estimated that 50 % of the world's population will have developed one or more allergies in year 2030. At least 1.5 million people in Norway have asthma, allergy, eczema, COPD or hypersensitivity illnesses.

Poor indoor climate and polluted air are two well-known areas that require considerable measures (naaf.no). What does your municipality do with these challenges?

Accident prevention – an upper femur fracture is estimated to cost the society 380.000 NOK only the first year. How much does it cost to sprinkle?

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## MAKE IT EASY TO CHOOSE HEALTHY.

Norwegian Healthy Cities Network, is a network organization consisting of municipalities and county authorities who focus on promoting a holistic approach to local public health work. Norwegian Healthy Cities Network is participating in modeling national public health policies.

[www.sunnekommuner.no](http://www.sunnekommuner.no)

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