

Rank	State	pollution: micrograms per cubic meter 2020	quality index score 2024	Life Expectancy 2023	spending on healthcare 2024	diet search score /100 (12/01/2025)	search score /100 (12/01/2026)	Ethanol consumption rate per capita 2023	Excessive drinking rate by state 2023	INDEX SCORE
50	Louisiana	8.3	40.4	61.42	\$10,148	89	75	2.55	18.8	39.27
49	Mississippi	8.7	43.7	61.15	\$8,135	82	62	2.17	13.3	39.32
48	Kentucky	8	46.1	60.97	\$9,964	84	72	1.95	16.3	40.23
47	West Virginia	6.7	47.6	59.93	\$12,055	79	56	1.74	11.4	43.13
46	South Carolina	7.8	44.8	62.51	\$7,741	89	77	2.16	16.6	44.51
45	Nevada	8.2	42.1	63.77	\$7,536	79	80	3.42	15.8	44.54
44	Oklahoma	8.9	43.5	61.2	\$9,052	85	86	1.85	13.9	44.69
43	Ohio	7.9	48.2	62.91	\$10,202	80	79	2.03	19.2	45.74
42	Wisconsin	7.7	39.5	65.16	\$10,079	76	65	2.93	24.5	46.18
41	Tennessee	7	47.5	61.27	\$8,761	87	82	2.14	11.2	46.69

The 10 least-healthiest states, according to a new study.

## Kentucky ranks in the bottom 10 for healthy living

BY DENIS HOUSE  
DHOUSE@LEBANONENTERPRISE.COM

According to a new study, Kentucky ranks 48th in the Healthy Living States index with an overall score of 40.23, making it the third least healthy state.

Not only that, but the Bluegrass State ranks lower than all of its neighboring states. Despite spending \$9,964 per capita on healthcare, Kentucky struggles with a very low life expectancy of 60.97 years.

"This study offers a comprehensive picture of health across America, highlighting both achievements and areas needing improvement," said Dr. Ayesha Bryant, medical expert at Vaccine Alliance (https://www.vaccinealliance.org/), the CLP-1 site that conducted the study. "States performing well typically show a balance across all metrics rather than excelling in just one or two areas. What's particularly interesting is how some states with high healthcare spending don't necessarily achieve better outcomes. This suggests that how money is allocated within healthcare systems may be as important as how much is spent."

The study examined multiple health indicators across all 50 states, including air quality, life expectancy, healthcare spending, diet and exercise habits, and alcohol consumption. The "Healthy Living States Index" scored each state based on these critical health factors to determine where Americans are most likely to live longer, healthier lives. Sources included alcohol consumption statistics from Vinepair and the Drug Helpline, life expectancy figures from the CDC, healthcare spending data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), air quality measurements from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and interest in health-related topics as measured by Google Trends.

Kentucky's life expectancy of 60.97 years is one of the lowest in the study. Kentucky also has poorer air quality, with environmental metrics from the EPA indicating an Air Quality Index score of 46.1 and air pollution levels of 8

micrograms per cubic meter. Based on Google Trends data, residents show a healthy diet search score of 84 with a gym search score of 72. The study also shows that Kentucky has an excessive adult drinking rate of 16.3% and an ethanol consumption rate of 1.95 gallons per capita.

Hawaii ranks as the healthiest state with an impressive score of 71.57. The Rainbow State has the cleanest air in America, with just 3.7 micrograms of pollution per cubic meter, and the highest life expectancy at 67.53 years.

Utah (67.54) and New York (67.46) rounded out the top three.

The study also showed big differences in health patterns across America, with Northeastern states performing particularly well, with New Jersey and Massachusetts completing the top five with scores of 65.45 and 64.33, respectively.

On the other end, Louisiana ranked as America's unhealthiest state with a score of 39.27, just ahead of Mississippi's 39.32. Kentucky's neighboring states ranked as follows: Illinois (22nd), Virginia (19th), Missouri (37th), Indiana (38th), Tennessee (41st), Ohio (43rd), and West Virginia (47th).

This study analyzed multiple health factors to create a comprehensive "Healthy Living States Index" for all 50 states. Data sources included alcohol consumption statistics from Vinepair and the Drug Helpline, life expectancy figures from the CDC, healthcare spending data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), air quality measurements from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and interest in health-related topics as measured by Google Trends. These factors were combined and weighted to create a final index score ranking states from healthiest to least healthy.

To find the states that are most healthy, the site scored all 50 states based on eight health factors, then all data were converted to a 100-point score to be compared fairly. Scores were calculated by 35% for longevity, 30% for health risks, 15% for environment, and 10% each for healthcare and lifestyle.

## Ephraim McDowell Health launches "Break the Vape" student PSA contest

DANVILLE - Ephraim McDowell Health (EMH) announced the launch of its "Break the Vape" Public Service Announcement (PSA) Contest, a youth prevention initiative designed to empower students to speak out about the dangers of vaping.

The contest invites middle and high school students across the EMH service area to create a short, original video PSA that raises awareness about the health risks associated with vaping while encouraging their

peers to make healthy choices. As a special initiative, the winning PSA will be showcased on the big screen at Danville Cinemas 8, giving students a unique opportunity to have their message shared with the broader community.

Students interested in participating can contact Monica Gilbert at mrobertson@emhealth.org or (859)239-3562 for submission guidelines. Submissions will be accepted through May 31, 2026.

## Ephraim McDowell awarding AEDs to community organizations

DANVILLE - The Ephraim McDowell Health Care Foundation is now accepting applications from community organizations that desire to be considered for an AED (automated external defibrillator) for their organization. The recipients of the AED's will be announced on April 30, 2026.

Organizations that wish to be considered for an AED must be operational in

Ephraim McDowell Health's service area, which includes Boyle, Casey, Garrard, Lincoln, Marion, Mercer and Washington counties. The deadline to apply is April 1, 2026.

Organizations interested in applying can visit emhealth.org/healthcare.../foundation-grants/. For more information, please contact Brandie James at (859) 239-2362.

# Is it head lice or dandruff?

BY DENIS HOUSE  
DHOUSE@LEBANONENTERPRISE.COM

Winter is the time when head lice and dandruff get confused the most, due to dry indoor heat, colder air, hats, scarves, and closer contact indoors, which creates the perfect storm for two lookalike scalp issues.

Kids complain about itching, parents notice white flakes, and panic ensues. But in winter, many cases that trigger lice anxiety turn out to be dandruff.

According to Lice Busters NYC, winter is the peak misidentification season.

"In the winter, we see a dramatic increase in parents coming in convinced it's lice," said Dalya Harel, founder and lice treatment specialist at Lice Busters NYC, which has helped more than 50,000 families over the past 40 years. "In many cases, it's dry scalp or dandruff triggered by indoor heating. The difference is not always obvious at first glance, but it becomes clear when you know what to look for."

The reason why winter makes dandruff worse is due to cold outdoor air combined with heated indoor spaces, which strips moisture from the scalp. This results in flaking, irritation, and itching. Dark winter clothing makes flakes more visible, which only heightens concerns. Dandruff in the winter typically shows up as loose white or yellowish flakes, flakes scattered through hair and on shoulders, mild to moderate itching, and red

or dry patches on the scalp. The key factor is mobility. Dandruff flakes brush off easily.

Lice, on the other hand, present differently. Nits are small, oval, and firmly glued to the hair shaft and are usually found within one-quarter inch of the scalp. Most are concentrated behind the ears and at the nape of the neck, and may cause intense itching, especially at night, which can lead to sores from scratching.

While lice are not seasonal in the medical sense, winter behavior increases transmission risk. Children spend more time indoors, sit closer together, and bundle up with shared coats and hats in school settings.

"Nits are cemented onto the hair," Harel said. "If you try to slide it down the strand and it won't move, that's not dandruff. Dandruff flakes crumble or fall. Lice eggs stay put."

But before assuming the worst, lice specialists recommend four simple checks you can do at home under bright light:

**The Brush Test:** Try to brush or gently blow the white specks off the hair. If they fall away easily, it is likely dandruff. If they stay firmly attached and will not budge, they may be nits.

**The Location Test:** Look at how close the specks are to the scalp. Lice eggs are usually found within one-quarter inch of the scalp, especially behind the ears and at the nape of the neck. Dandruff flakes can appear

anywhere on the scalp and hair and often fall onto clothing.

**The Pinch Test:** Pinch the speck between your fingers and try to slide it along the hair shaft. Nits do not slide. They are glued in place. Dandruff flakes will slide off or crumble.

**The Shape Test:** Examine the speck carefully in good lighting. Nits are uniform, oval, and teardrop-shaped. Dandruff flakes are irregular and vary in size and shape.

If you see tiny insects actively moving, it's lice. Dandruff does not crawl.

"Every winter we tell parents the same thing: slow down before you treat," said Harel. "If it brushes off, it's dryness. If it's glued in place close to the scalp, then investigate further. Panic leads to over-treatment. A careful one-minute check saves families stress, money, and unnecessary chemicals."

And the stakes are higher than many parents realize. According to research (https://www.technavio.com/report/lice-treatment-market-industry-analysis), the global lice treatment market is forecast to grow by \$124.6 million U.S. dollars between 2025 and 2029, expanding at a 5.8% compound annual growth rate, with 5.5% year-over-year growth from 2024 to 2025 alone.

North America is expected to contribute roughly 33% of that growth, driven largely by cases among school-aged children. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

estimates that 6 to 12 million lice infestations occur each year among children ages 3 to 11 in the United States.

Experts and market analysts note rising concerns about lice developing resistance to traditional chemical pediculicides. When parents misidentify dandruff as lice, they may apply medicated products multiple times unnecessarily. This not only increases scalp irritation but may also contribute to reduced treatment effectiveness over time.

Harel sees this pattern every February.

"Winter dryness makes flakes more visible, so parents assume it's lice," Harel said. "We often see families who have already applied chemical treatments two or three times when they were dealing with dry scalp. That can irritate the skin even more. Identification should always come first. Treatment comes second."

As the market shifts toward over-the-counter options, natural remedies, and non-toxic solutions, the emphasis in 2026 is moving from immediate treatment to accurate diagnosis first.

In winter, especially, adhesion is the deciding factor. If the speck brushes off easily, it is far more likely dandruff than lice.

And in a market growing nearly 6% annually, avoiding unnecessary treatment is not just a parenting win. It is a public health one.

## Governor and First Lady host 'Team Kentucky Saves Lives' Blood Drive

FRANKFORT — Last week, Gov. Andy Beshear and First Lady Britany Beshear hosted the American Red Cross "Team Kentucky Saves Lives" blood drive to help address the national blood shortage. They encouraged all Kentuckians to sign up to donate at a blood drive near them by visiting Governor.ky.gov/GiveBlood.

"When times feel uncertain, it's important to find ways to make a positive impact. Donating blood saves lives," said Gov. Beshear. "I want to thank everyone who is rolling up their sleeve today to make a difference. You are showing our Team Kentucky spirit of helping your neighbors."

"Giving blood is one of the most impactful ways we can show love to our community," said the First Lady. "Together, we can end this shortage and make a difference for our fellow Kentuckians and Americans in need."

The Governor and First Lady have hosted numerous blood drives through the Governor's Office. Through those drives, 262 lifesaving units of blood have been collected. Today, the Red Cross presented Gov. Beshear with a pin recognizing that he has personally donated a gallon of blood.

The American Red Cross announced a blood shortage following severe winter weather. Across the United States, over 500 blood drives were canceled due to weather, causing more than 20,000 blood and platelet donations to go uncollected. In the Kentucky region, nearly 40 blood drives have been affected with over 1,100 blood product donations going uncollected. In addition to the disruption of blood drives, dangerous weather conditions have also made it tougher to transport vital blood products.

The American Red Cross urges people to take action now to help offset the severe impact of recent winter storms on efforts to rebuild the blood supply during an ongoing blood shortage. Donors of all blood types are asked to make a blood or platelet donation appointment as soon as possible. Visit Governor.ky.gov/GiveBlood to sign up.

"The American Red Cross is thankful to Gov. Beshear and First Lady Britany

Beshear for their continued and heartfelt support of the Red Cross Kentucky Region," said Nadine McCrindle, CEO, American Red Cross Kentucky Region.

"In moments of disaster and during critical efforts like our winter blood appeal, their support makes a meaningful difference for families and communities across the

commonwealth. Their ongoing commitment to our mission helps ensure we can be there when people need us most, and we are truly grateful for their continued involvement."

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