

# Faith Communities

## EASY STEPS TO SUPPORT HEALTH AND WELLBEING



Many look to their faith communities for social support, information on family life and managing life's challenges. Faith communities can play an important role in promoting health and reducing the risk of chronic disease.

### KEY STRATEGIES

#### 1. Promote healthy foods

- Create healthy food guidelines for coffee hours, potlucks, meetings and youth events.
- Support local, healthy food initiatives and encourage healthy food donations for the community food pantry.

#### 2. Go tobacco-free

- Create a property-wide tobacco-free policy.
- Offer quit support to staff and host quit groups onsite.

#### 3. Help community members be more physically active

- Provide bike racks, inviting stairwells or walking paths.
- Offer physical activity options for all ages and abilities.

#### 4. Become a breastfeeding-friendly house of worship

- Offer a clean and private room for nursing mothers who desire privacy.

#### 5. Promote preventative care

- Promote health awareness months.
- Open building for health-related community events.

#### 6. Support emotional wellbeing

- Offer stress reduction activities and support groups for addiction recovery.
- Coordinate a robust program for youth members that provides constructive opportunities for health and wellbeing.

### DATA HIGHLIGHTS:

- Over 21% of Vermonters attend religious services at least once a week, and 50% attend at least a few times a year.
- Some studies show a small to moderate effect from church-based health promotion interventions related to fruit and vegetable intake, physical activity and weight.
- 60% of Vermont adults are either overweight or obese, making them more susceptible to chronic illness.
- 24% of Vermont adults currently use tobacco, but 43% made a quit attempt in the past year.

*"The faith community tends to be a really untapped resource with people coming together around shared values. It's a ready-made constituency for the public health community to engage with."*

*Barbara Weinstein, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism*

### MORE RESOURCES

Visit [healthvermont.gov/3-4-50](http://healthvermont.gov/3-4-50) for more resources, including:

*Church-Based Health Promotion Interventions: Evidence and Lessons Learned*  
*Religious Landscape Study*