

Other Health-Related Behaviors and Academic Achievement



Montana Office of Public Instruction • Elsie Arntzen, Superintendent • www.opi.mt.gov

What is the relationship between other health-related behaviors and academic achievement?

Data presented below from the 2023 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) show a negative association between health-related behaviors and academic achievement. This means that students with higher grades are more likely to engage in healthy behaviors than their classmates with lower grades, and students who do not engage in health-related behaviors receive lower grades than their classmates who do engage in health-related behaviors. These associations do not prove causation. Further research is needed to determine whether low grades lead to unhealthy behaviors, unhealthy behaviors lead to low grades, or some other factors lead to both of these problems.

Percentage of high school students who engaged in physical activity-related behaviors, by type of grades earned – Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2023.

Other Health-Related Behaviors	Percentage of Montana high school students who engaged in each risk behavior, by type of grades mostly earned				Significant Association*
	A's	B's	C's	D's/F's	
Saw a dentist (for a check-up, exam, teeth cleaning, or other dental work) during the past 12 months	82	77	68	59	Yes
Have never seen a dentist in their lifetime	1	1	1	3	No
Had ever been told by a doctor or nurse that they had asthma	14	16	20	17	No
Currently have asthma	10	12	13	17	Yes
Missed one or more days of school because of their asthma during the past 30 days	11	10	12	29	Yes
Did not usually sleep in their parent's or guardian's home during the past 30 days	3	4	6	12	Yes
Slept away from their parents or guardians during the past 30 days because they were kicked out, ran away, or were abandoned	5	6	8	11	Yes
Used an indoor tanning device during the past 12 months	6	5	6	5	No
Received help from a resource teacher, speech therapist, or other special education teacher at school during the past 12 months	10	18	24	24	Yes
Spoke with a mental health provider at school (such as a counselor, psychologist, or social worker)	19	23	31	36	Yes

*Based on logistic regression analysis controlling for sex, race/ethnicity, and grade in school, $p < 0.05$.

Figure 1. Percentage of high school students, by health-related behavior, by grades earned. Montana YRBS, 2023.

Other Health-Related Behaviors

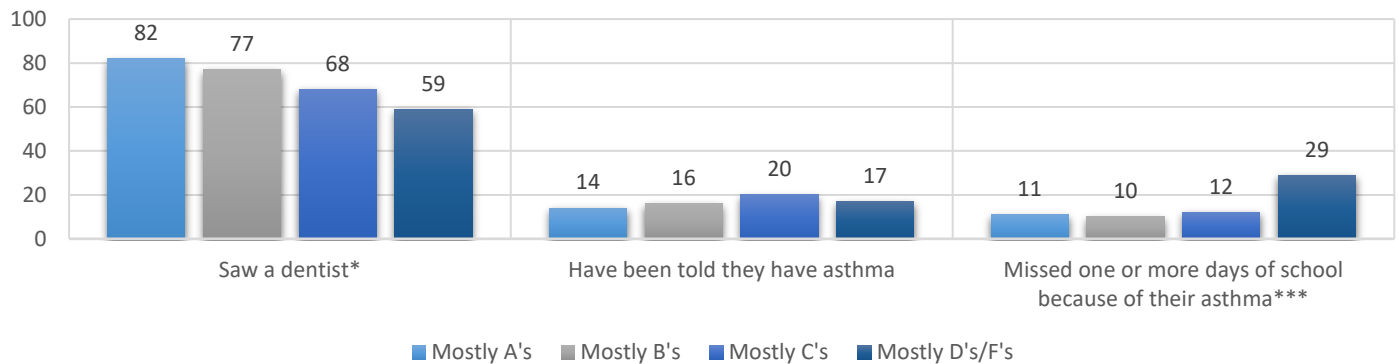
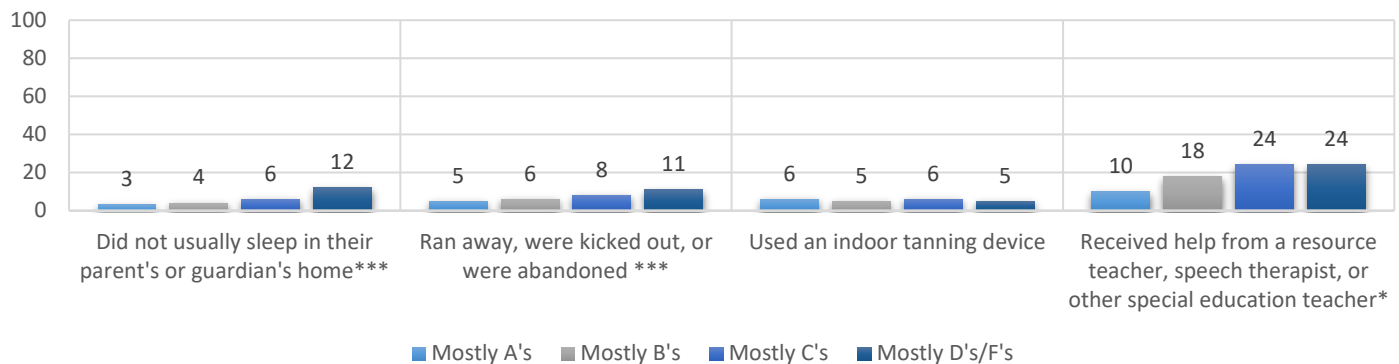


Figure 2. Percentage of high school students, by health-related behavior, by grades earned. Montana YRBS, 2023.

Other Health-Related Behaviors



* During the past 12 months.
 ** Lifetime.
 *** During the past 30 days.

The Montana YRBS monitors priority health-risk behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death, disability, and social problems among youth and adults in the United States. It is conducted every 2 years during late winter and provides data representative of high school students in Montana. In 2023, students completing the YRBS were asked, “During the past 12 months, how would you describe your grades in school?” and given seven response options (Mostly A’s, Mostly B’s, Mostly C’s, Mostly D’s, Mostly F’s, None of these grades, and Not sure). In 2023, 46% of students received mostly A’s, 27% received mostly B’s, 15% received mostly C’s, 7% received mostly D’s or F’s, and 5% reported receiving none of these grades or not sure. The YRBS has been administered by the Office of Public Instruction in collaboration with Montana schools since 1991. For more information on the YRBS please visit www.opi.mt.gov/yrbs.

Montana High School Students - Grades Earned

