Birth, marriage, death, disease, and accidents are among the vital statistics collected to help measure the health and well-being of the population. Benton County had 196 births in 1996, a change of 77 births from five years earlier in 1992 (64.7 percent increase). Of those live births, 17 were to teen mothers under age 20 — or 8.7 percent of all births in the county. Most births occurred to women between the ages of 20 to 29 (60.2 percent) and 30 to 39 (28.6 percent). There were 3 births to women age 40 and older in 1996, and 1 in 1992. The number of teen pregnancies in 1995 was 22, compared to 18 (12.5 percent) in 1990. There were 74 marriages in 1996, and 92 in 1990.

Among Benton County two-year old children in 1996, 96 percent had been fully immunized. Benton County had 115 deaths in 1996. Of those deaths, 39 (33.9 percent) were due to heart disease and 30 (26.1 percent) due to cancer. Motor vehicle accidents claimed 1 life in 1996.

Sadly, in fiscal year 1997, 21 Benton County children were reported abused and 31 neglected; of those, 4 were substantiated as physical abuse, 0 as sexual abuse, and 4 as neglect. The percent of cases substantiated was 19.0 percent for abuse and 12.9 percent for neglect. The rate of abuse and neglect per 1,000 children under age 18 in Benton County was 3.0 in 1997, compared to 10.9 in 1996.

Questions to ponder...
Are low-cost health services such as immunization for children available to the working poor? What programs can help children and teens at risk? Are services available to help mothers of newborns? Do schools or other organizations provide education to children on drug and alcohol abuse? Is there a safety-net available to abuse victims?