

Your Health Your Life

A Women's Health
Newsletter from the
Atlantic County
Division of Public Health

January - March, 2009

2009, Your Year to Shine. . .

It's a new year, time to start fresh. Why not make this the year that you start taking care of yourself. If you're not sure where to begin, here are some easy suggestions to start yourself on the way to wellness:

- * *Stay active*
- * *Eat more fruits and veggies*
- * *Always use your seatbelt*
- * *Get regular check-ups*
- * *Eat smart*
- * *Drink lots of water*
- * *Do self-exams*
- * *Don't drink and drive*
- * *Quit smoking*
- * *Exercise*
- * *Get plenty of rest*
- * *Wear sun block*

In addition, try to relax and manage your stress. By practicing stress management and relaxation techniques, you will be better equipped to handle those everyday stresses. You can work toward this goal by: learning to say NO, meditating, listening to calming music and in general treating yourself well. It's not selfish, it's healthy!

Wishing you a happy and healthy 2009!

The Atlantic County Division of Public Health provides a service that will help heal lives, families and our community. Would you be interested in a substance abuse screening for yourself or a loved one?

Atlantic County residents can schedule an appointment at no charge, for a confidential substance abuse screening. The county has access to all of the available assessment and substance abuse treatment programs.

Substance use disorders are treatable diseases. Call to schedule a screening today! Further information and referrals are available at 609-645-5932.

Healthy Foods for a Healthy Lifestyle. . .

There are several fad diets that will lead to successful weight loss if you follow them exactly as they are designed. That doesn't mean every food that fits into a diet is a healthy food, but it does mean you have to change your eating patterns to fit the diet's rules. Rather than worry about following a fad diet, think about your health and your lifestyle instead. Start by learning which foods are good for you.

The closer a food is to its natural state, the better it is for you. Fresh fruits and berries are great and will satisfy a craving for sweets. Whole vegetables have lots of vitamins and minerals, so eat more green, orange and yellow vegetables. Steam them to retain the most nutritional value and be careful with sauces, they may be high in calories and fats that aren't good for you. Any pasta or baked goods should be made from whole grains. Avoid sugary snacks and pastries as well. An apple is good for you, an apple pie really isn't. Stick to water, milk and 100% fruit and vegetable juices as your main beverages and limit sugary soft drinks. If you get tired of plain water, add a slice of lemon or lime to add a touch of flavor. For kids, try some fruit juice jazzed up with carbonated water. Remember to eat a variety of foods to get all of the vitamins and minerals you need to be healthy.

Our stomachs really aren't that big. Without stretching, the stomach will hold about two cups of food, but because the stomach will stretch, it can hold considerably more food than we need at any given meal.

When you eat at home, serve your meals already dished up on individual plates rather than family style at the table. You will be less likely to reach for "seconds" that way. At restaurants, ask for "take home" containers and take half of your meal home to heat up tomorrow. Avoid buffets, unless you are very disciplined. It is way too tempting to load up three or four plates plus dessert. Do you feel like you can't live without your chocolate? If there are foods you won't give up, enjoy them in smaller amounts. Buy one tiny high quality piece of candy and enjoy it, but don't buy a bag full of snacks to take with you. Limit other treats or favorite foods that aren't healthy. Allow yourself to eat them one time per month, or search for healthier versions at natural foods markets.

If you can't transform your unhealthy diet overnight, don't despair. Most people can't. Start implementing some of these ideas, even just one at a time. Every change you make will be one step in the right direction.



Heart Health & Your Family. . .

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in men and women in America. Yet, many women continue to underestimate their risk of developing heart disease.

The good news is that heart disease can be prevented. You can significantly lower your risk of heart disease—by as much as 82 percent—by adopting sensible health habits. So, no matter what your age, now is the time to start taking steps to improve your heart health as well as your children and other family members.

Factors That Increase Your Risk of Heart Disease

Heart disease includes heart attacks, strokes and other cardiovascular diseases. What makes a person more likely to develop heart disease? The following are known risk factors for heart disease:

- Age
- Family history
- Smoking tobacco
- Physical inactivity
- Overweight/obesity
- High blood pressure, also called hypertension
- High LDL, or "bad" cholesterol, and/or low HDL, or

"good" cholesterol

- Pre-diabetes or diabetes

Many of these factors tend to cluster—if you have one, you are likely to have others. For example, someone who is obese is very likely to develop diabetes, have high cholesterol and blood pressure, and in need of exercise.

How you respond to stress and drinking too much alcohol can also make you more vulnerable to heart disease.

While some risk factors are beyond your control, such as increasing age and family history of early heart disease, the lifestyle choices you make every day can have a big impact on your risk of heart disease.

As the health manager for your family, you can take charge and create a heart-healthy environment, which encourages kids to adopt healthful habits early on. By making healthy lifestyle changes yourself, you can also lower your risk of heart disease and improve your overall physical and mental health. For more information, talk to your health care provider or call the Atlantic County Division of Public Health at **609-645-5853**.

Don't Become a Statistic: Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Kills. . .

With the colder weather comes the concern for carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. This season, the New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES) received over 30 calls in November alone for assistance in managing patients who were exposed to CO.

People are urged to use extreme caution when using sources of carbon monoxide such as unvented kerosene and gas space heaters, gas water heaters, wood stoves, leaking and gas stoves. Other common sources are blocked chimneys which are supposed to vent furnaces and fireplaces, and automobile exhaust from attached or unvented garages when automobiles are being warmed up.

Since carbon monoxide is an odorless and colorless gas that can deprive the body of oxygen, NJPIES encourages everyone to install carbon monoxide detectors in their home. Exposure can produce headaches, sleepiness, fatigue, confusion and irritability at low levels. At higher levels, it can result in nausea, vomiting, irregular heartbeat, impaired vision and coordination, and death.

Life Saving Tips from NJPIES

- Open flues when fireplaces are in use
- Chimneys should be inspected and cleaned annually
- DO NOT idle the car inside the garage
- Use the correct fuel in kerosene heaters
- NEVER use charcoal indoors or in areas with inadequate ventilation
- Have a trained professional inspect, clean and tune-up central heating systems like the furnace every year
- Gas appliances must have adequate ventilation so that carbon monoxide will not accumulate
- Have operational carbon monoxide detectors in your home especially near sleeping areas

Remember, Help Is Just A Phone Call Away!

If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, call the Poison Help Hotline at **1-800-222-1222**, to speak with a poison information specialist for immediate treatment advice as well as for prevention information. The hotline is accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Wellness Tip of the Quarter: Start the new year off right by making an appointment for health screenings. For more information contact our clinic services at 609-645-5933.

Flu shots are still available by appointment. Call the Atlantic County Division of Public Health at 609-645-5933 for more information or to schedule your flu shot. It's not too late to protect yourself against the flu this year.



Atlantic County Division of Public Health: Working for Healthy People and Healthy Communities
Atlantic County Executive, Dennis Levinson. Atlantic County Board of Chosen Freeholders