

Your Health Your Life

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

April - June, 2009

"Osteoporosis. It's Beatable. It's Treatable."

Every 20 seconds, another American breaks a bone as a result of osteoporosis. More than 10 million Americans have osteoporosis, a disease in which our bones silently thin, weaken and often break. Nearly half of all women older than 50 will break a bone because of this disease.

In recent years researchers have developed effective new treatments for osteoporosis, and people of all ages are learning that a bone-healthy lifestyle, including exercise and eating right, can help prevent the disease.

Together, the following five steps can increase your bone health and help prevent osteoporosis:

- Get the daily recommended amounts of calcium and vitamin D.
- Engage in regular weight-bearing and muscle-strengthening exercise.
- Avoid smoking and excessive alcohol.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about bone health.
- Have a bone density test and take medication when appropriate.

National Health Observances

April:

National Public Health Week - 6th - 12th
National Arthritis Awareness Month

May:

National Older Americans Month
National High Blood Pressure Education Month
National Osteoporosis Awareness Month
Lyme Disease Awareness Month

June:

Home Safety Month
Sun Safety Week - 1st - 7th

Celebrating Life . .

Older Americans Month is a great time to bring attention to the issues that affect older adults and create community-wide opportunities to help older Americans improve their quality of life. This year's theme is "Living Today For a Better Tomorrow." We must work together to give older adults the tools they need to make healthy decisions.

By 2030, one in every five Americans will be age 65 or older. Although the risk of disease increases with advancing age, poor health is not an inevitable consequence of aging. Many illnesses, disabilities and even death associated with chronic disease are preventable.

Nearly 40% of deaths in America can be attributed to poor health habits such as lack of physical exercise, poor eating habits and smoking. Older Americans can prevent or control chronic disease by adopting healthy habits such as exercising regularly, maintaining a healthy diet and ceasing tobacco use.

The benefits of regular physical activity include weight control; healthy bones, muscles and joints; arthritis relief; reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression; and more. Exercise does not have to be strenuous and is safe for people of all age groups. In fact, it's healthier to exercise than eliminate it altogether.

Older Americans can greatly benefit from a regular exercise routine that includes strength, balance, stretching and endurance exercises.

In addition to a regular exercise routine, good nutrition is vital in maintaining good health. Improving older Americans' diets can reduce the occurrence of chronic diseases, but most older adults over age 65 do not maintain a healthy diet. Reducing saturated fats and eating a balanced diet of fruits, vegetables, and grains can help keep older Americans on the right track to staying healthy. Tobacco use increases the risk of heart disease and cancer and is the single most preventable cause of death in the United States. Older adults who stop smoking will gain immediate and long-term health benefits.

While it's important for older Americans to have good physical health, it's equally important that they maintain good mental health. Studies have shown that engaging in social activities within the community can greatly improve mental health which leads to physical health, greater life satisfaction, lower rates of depression and lower mortality rates. Americans of all ages and backgrounds can celebrate Older Americans Month. By working together, we can improve the health and well being of our older adults and pave the way for better health as we age.



Atlantic County Division of Public Health: Working for Healthy People and Healthy Communities

Atlantic County Executive, Dennis Levinson Atlantic County Board of Chosen Freeholders, James Curcio, Chairman

Be Prepared, the Ticks are here . . .

Lyme disease is an infection that is spread by ticks. You can get Lyme disease if you are bitten by an infected tick. But most people who have had a tick bite do not get Lyme disease. It's still important to see your doctor if you have a tick attached to you that you can't remove.

Lyme disease is common in the United States, especially in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states. While the disease can be spread all year long, the spring and summer are the prime times for Lyme disease. Therefore, it is important to remove ticks as soon as you notice them. Infected ticks usually don't spread Lyme disease until they have been attached for at least 36 hours.

What are the symptoms?

One sign of Lyme disease is a round, red rash that spreads at the site of a tick bite. This rash can get very large or may not appear at all.

Flu-like symptoms are also very common. People in the early stages of Lyme disease may feel very tired and have headaches, sore muscles and joints, and a fever.

These symptoms can start at any time, from 3 days up to a month after you have been bitten. Some people don't have any symptoms when they are in the early stages of Lyme disease. And they may not even remember getting a tick bite.



If Lyme disease goes untreated, you can have more serious symptoms over time. These include:

- Swelling and joint pain.
- Tingling and numbness in your hands, feet, and back.
- A lack of energy that does not get better.
- Trouble focusing your thoughts.
- Poor memory.
- Weakness or paralysis in your face muscles.

Protect yourself from tick bites.

Before going out: put on light-colored clothing and tuck shirts into pants and pants into socks. Wear closed shoes. Apply a tick repellent and be certain that you follow the directions.

While outside: stay in the center of trails; avoid low bushes and leafy brush; periodically check clothing and skin for ticks and remove any you find.

Upon return: check clothing, skin and hair for ticks. Also check pets. If a tick is found, carefully remove it with tweezers

For more information contact: the Atlantic County Division of Public Health at 645-5935.

"It's Your Time" . . .

National Women's Health Week is a weeklong health observance coordinated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office on Women's Health (OWH). National Women's Health Week empowers women to make their health a top priority. With the theme "It's Your Time," the nationwide initiative encourages women to take simple steps for a longer, healthier, and happier life. During National Women's Health Week, communities, businesses, government, health organizations, and other groups work together to educate women about steps they can take to improve their physical and mental health and lower their risks of certain diseases. Important steps include:

- ◆ Getting at least 2 ½ hours of moderate physical activity, 1 hour and 15 minutes of vigorous physical activity, or a combination of both each week. If you have not been physically active for a long time, you need to start slowly and then work your way up as you become more fit. For example, if you do not feel up to walking for 30 minutes, try walking for 10 minutes. Then increase

your walking time by 5 minutes each week until you reach 30 minutes.

- ◆ Eating a nutritious diet.
- ◆ Visiting a health care professional for regular checkups and preventive screenings.
- ◆ Avoiding risky behaviors, like smoking and not wearing a seatbelt.
- ◆ Paying attention to mental health, including getting enough sleep and managing stress.



The Atlantic County Division of Public Health offers several clinics that can help you stay healthy. For more information on our clinics call (609) 645-5933.

Wellness Tip of the Quarter: Being physically active is one of the most important things you can do to improve your health. Physical activity is linked with many positive health benefits, including lowering risk of early death and a number of chronic diseases and conditions. It also gives you the opportunity to have fun, enjoy the outdoors, and be with family and friends.

