

Your Health Your Life

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

October - December, 2007

Breast Self Exams, They Can Help Detect Cancer Early.

If you are not already in the habit of doing a monthly breast self exam now is a great time to start.

Women should examine their breasts regularly to detect lumps or abnormalities that could signal breast cancer.

If you do find a lump, don't panic -- about 80 percent of biopsied breast lumps are benign. But do call your ob/gyn right away to discuss further testing.

Here are the five basic steps to a breast self exam, courtesy of Breastcancer.org:

- Standing with your shoulders straight and your arms on your hips, face a mirror. Look for any differences in size, shape, color, swelling or bulging of the skin, changes in the nipple, or any signs of redness or rash.
- Raise your arms and examine your breasts for any of those differences.
- Gently squeeze each nipple to check for any discharge.
- Lie down and feel each breast with the hand of the opposite arm. Feel all the tissue, applying pressure to check deep tissue for any lumps or abnormalities.
- Examine the breasts while you are standing or sitting, gently examining the entire breast. You may want to try this method in the shower, while the skin is slippery.



National Health Observances

October:

National Breast Cancer Awareness Month
Lupus Awareness Month
Eye Injury Prevention Month
Healthy Lung Month

November:

American Diabetes Month
Lung Cancer Awareness Month
Great American Smokeout, 15th
National Healthy Skin Month
National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month

December:

National Handwashing Awareness Month
World AIDS Day

What Every Woman Should Know About Lupus...

Did you know that Lupus affects up to 1.4 million people in this country? If you're surprised, read on to learn more about this disease.

Lupus, also called systemic lupus erythematosus or SLE, is a disease that affects your immune system. Normally, your immune system fights infections caused by germs. Instead of protecting your body, your immune system makes the mistake of attacking your body's healthy cells. Lupus can affect almost any part of your body, including your joints, skin, kidneys, heart, lungs, blood vessels, and brain. There is no way to know what part of your body will be affected. For most people, lupus is a mild disease affecting only a few parts of your body, and some patients don't get inner organ problems (like in the heart and lungs), but do have skin and joint problems.

Normally, lupus develops slowly, with symptoms that come and go. For some, it can cause serious and even life-threatening problems. Patients with diseases that hurt their organs, but continue to practice good care and management while maintaining a strong relationship with their doctor, do have a good prognosis. There is no known cure for lupus, but there are effective treatments.



About 9 out of 10 people who have lupus are women. Lupus is 3

times more common in black women than in white women. It is also more common in women of Hispanic/Latina, Asian, and American Indian descent. Black and Hispanic/Latina women tend to develop symptoms at an earlier age than other women. African Americans have more severe organ problems, especially with their kidneys.

If you're interested in finding out more about Lupus visit:
www.lupus.org.



November Is More Than Turkey . . .



 American Diabetes Association.

During American Diabetes Month, the American Diabetes Association (ADA) is focusing on the "Many Faces of Diabetes" within the community. Nearly 21 million children and adults have diabetes and an additional 54 million are at-risk for

developing type 2 diabetes. Because of this, the ADA will raise awareness about the importance of knowing the risk factors and symptoms associated with diabetes, as well as its serious and life-threatening complications such as heart disease, stroke, blindness, kidney disease and amputation. To help prevent this epidemic from growing further, ADA is highlighting some of the many faces affected by diabetes and the resources that are available from the ADA to the public.

The American Diabetes Association is the nation's premier voluntary health organization supporting diabetes research, information and advocacy. Founded in 1940, the Association has offices in every region of the country, providing services to hundreds of communities. For more information, please visit www.diabetes.org or call 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2382). Information from both these sources is available in English and Spanish.

All About the "SmokeOut" . . .

Every year smokers across the nation take part in the Great American Smokeout by smoking less or quitting for the day on the third Thursday in November. The event challenges people to stop using tobacco and raises awareness of the many effective ways to quit for good.



Research shows that smokers are most successful in kicking the habit when they have some means of support, such as nicotine replacement products, counseling, prescription medicine to lessen cravings, guide books, and the encouragement of friends and family members.

Despite that, only about 1 in 7 current smokers reports having tried any of the recommended therapies during his or her last quit attempt. Telephone quitlines are a convenient new resource, available for free in many states.

Call 1-800-ACS-2345 to find a quitline or other science-based support in your area.

Flu Vaccine - Facts & Myths . . .

MYTH: "The flu isn't a serious disease."

FACTS: Influenza (flu) is a serious disease of the nose, throat, and lungs, and it can lead to pneumonia. Most who die as a result of the flu are 65 years and older. But small children less than 2 years old are as likely as those over 65 to have to go to the hospital because of the flu.

MYTH: "The flu shot can cause the flu."

FACTS: The flu shot cannot cause the flu. Some people get a little soreness or redness where they get the shot. It goes away in a day or two. Serious problems from the flu shot are very rare.

MYTH: "The flu shot does not work."

FACTS: Most of the time the flu shot will prevent the flu. In scientific studies, the effectiveness of the flu shot has ranged from 70% to 90% when there is a good match between circulating viruses and those in the vaccine. Getting the vaccine is your best protection against this disease.

MYTH: "The side effects are worse than the flu."

FACTS: The worst side effect you're likely to get from a flu shot is a sore arm. The nasal mist flu vaccine might cause nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat and cough. The risk of a severe allergic reaction is less than 1 in 4 million.

MYTH: "Only older people need a flu vaccine."

FACTS: Adults and children with conditions like asthma, diabetes, heart disease, and kidney disease need to get a flu shot. Doctors also recommend children 6 months and older get a flu shot every year until their 5th birthday.

MYTH: "You must get the flu vaccine before December."

FACTS: Flu vaccine can be given before or during the flu season. The best time to get vaccinated is October or November. But you can get vaccinated in December or later.

Wellness Tip of the Quarter:

Protect Your Health with a Flu Shot from the Atlantic County Division of Public Health. Flu Shots are available to any resident 18 or older for a fee of \$15. Pneumonia Shots are available to eligible residents 65 or older for a fee of \$25. There is no out-of-pocket fee for either shot for Medicare Part B recipients who present their Medicare card. To learn more, call 609-645-5933, the Flu Vaccination Hotline at 609-677-5720 or visit our website at www.aclink.org.



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