



NIAGARA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Press Release

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Healthy New Year

As we say farewell to 2009 and welcome in a new decade, many make New Year's resolutions about their health. Starting the New Year with some changes that will help lower risks for chronic diseases is a wise choice as the numbers regarding heart disease, diabetes and obesity are staggering. Niagara County has one of the highest rates for heart disease in New York State and the rates for pre diabetes and diabetes are increasing. While family history does play a role in these diseases, health behaviors are the major roles that contribute to these diseases.

One of the major risk factors for heart disease, diabetes and other chronic diseases is obesity. According to the 2009 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS), 62.4% of Niagara County adults are either overweight or obese. Eating a healthy diet that includes 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables is recommended as well as avoiding foods high in saturated fats, calories and sugar. However, the 2009 BRFSS showed that only 25.9% of Niagara County residents eat 5 or more servings of fruit or vegetables daily and that 27% had no leisure time activity. Being active, whether it is walking or more vigorous activity, is important for physical and mental health.

Knowing your numbers is a good way of tracking health. Blood pressure, cholesterol, weight and blood glucose numbers are indicators to health. These can be monitored by each person along with their health care provider during regular visits. Suggestions may be given to keep these numbers within a healthy range for each individual. Many of these numbers can be kept in check by simple changes in behaviors.

- Read food labels to help determine the number of fat calories, calories, sodium, and trans fats contained in the product.
- Reduce the portion size of meals.
- Get more physical activity. Start with walking short distances and add more steps weekly.
- Contact your local American Cancer Society for resources to help in quitting smoking.
- Reduce the intake of beverages high in caloric intake like soda pop. Choose water, juice or low-fat milk.
- Avoid junk foods or fast foods that are convenient but may be high in fats and calories.
- Keep a record of your "numbers" to gauge your progress.
- See your health care provider as recommended and follow instructions regarding taking medications.

Another wise healthy behavior not listed above is to have cancer screenings. Mammograms, pap tests, colonoscopies and PSA (Prostate Specific Antigen) tests can detect cancers early. If you have no health insurance for these cancer screenings or deductible, the Cancer Services Program of Niagara County may be able to help with no-cost mammograms, pap smears and colorectal cancer screening if you are between the ages of 40-64. For more information call 278-8285.

Making small changes can help in a healthier 2010 and may lower the risk for chronic diseases. Many resources are available. Information about diseases and conditions are listed on the Niagara County Department of Health website at www.niagaracounty.com/health.

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