



NIAGARA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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Press Release

National Women's Health Week

Niagara County Health Department
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National Women's Health Week will be celebrated this year beginning on Mother's Day, May 9th, through May 15th. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office on Women's Health coordinates nationwide efforts to encourage women to take simple steps for a longer and healthier life. Some of the recommendations include: eating a nutritious diet, being physically active, lowering risk factors for chronic disease and getting regular health care check-ups and screenings.

According to the Mayo Clinic, some of the largest health threats for women include: heart disease, cancer (lung and breast), stroke, and diabetes. While you cannot control some risk factors such as age, family history or gender, there are many ways to lower your risks and enjoy a healthier life. By making a few changes, you may find other health concerns have improved as well.

Eating a healthy diet is vital in maintaining our health status. In a recent Behavioral Risk Surveillance Survey it was reported that 55.2% of women in Niagara County were either overweight or obese. Obesity and being overweight is a contributing factor for many chronic diseases and a reason why the rate of diabetes has increased in Niagara County above the New York State rate. Eating a diet rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grain and fiber is recommended. Cutting back on foods high in saturated fats and sodium is also important. Learning to read food labels will help determine the fat and sodium contents of foods. A helpful website for nutritional information and label reading is **mypyramid.gov**.

Physical activity is another component of being healthy as it helps in toning muscles, burning extra calories and reducing stress. In Niagara County, 74.2% of adults participate in some type of leisure-time physical activity. This is lower than the New York State average. Walking is one of the easiest physical activities. We are fortunate in Niagara County to have wonderful parks and walkways to use. With the warm weather comes an opportunity to begin a walking program. Gardening, bike riding and organized sports are also great ways to increase physical activity. Being physically active can also be beneficial to other health issues such as osteoporosis, arthritis and mental health.

Visiting your health care provider and getting preventive screenings are vital in prevention. Yearly mammograms, pap tests, colorectal cancer tests, blood pressure checks, vision and dental check-ups help monitor health issues. Many insurances cover preventive care tests. If you have no health insurance or a high deductible, the Cancer Services Program of Niagara County can help cover the cost of mammograms, paps and colorectal cancer tests if you are 40-64 years of age. Call **285-8285** for more information.

PUBLIC HEALTH: PREVENT. PROMOTE. PROTECT.

Managing stress can be difficult but very necessary as stress can contribute to current health conditions or play a role in developing health problems. With the many roles women have in this day and age, managing stress or finding time for ourselves may be a challenge. Getting the proper amount of sleep each night is important for alertness and our ability to fight disease. An adult generally needs 6-8 hours nightly. A lack of sleep has also been linked to the incidence of being overweight. Find activities that alleviate stress and make sure to include them into your daily routine.

If you are a smoker, begin to think about ways to become a non-smoker. Register for a smoking cessation class or talk with your health care provider about the nicotine replacements that can assist you in quitting. Smoking is a major contributor to heart disease, lung disease and cancer. Even if you have tried to quit before and were not successful, don't give up. It generally takes a smoker several attempts before they finally quit.

National Women's Health Week is an opportunity for women to take a look at their health behaviors. By making some changes and focusing on prevention, women can take control of their health and work towards a healthy and happy life.