



The following articles by members of the Delaware General Health District staff appeared in The Delaware Gazette during National Public Health Week, April 5-11, 2010. We present them in keeping with the 2010 theme, “A Healthier America: One Community at a Time.”

Live Long and Prosper (and feel good)

By JESSE CARTER

Public Information Officer

Delaware General Health District

From the perspective of your health, physical activity is almost always good. Whether you're a 3rd grader romping on a playground, an adult hitting a jogging trail, or a senior in a mall walking group, physical activity is good. It's good for your heart, your muscles, your bones, and your psyche. It makes you feel good.

It has been more than a decade since the U.S. Surgeon General issued physical activity guidelines for Americans. As seen at www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/sgr/ataglan.htm, the Surgeon General's findings included:

- People who are usually inactive can improve their health and well-being by becoming even moderately active on a regular basis.
- Physical activity need not be strenuous to achieve health benefits.
- Greater health benefits can be achieved by increasing the amount (duration, frequency, or intensity) of physical activity.
- Regular physical activity reduces the risks of premature death, fatal heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and colon cancer; reduces feelings of depression and anxiety; helps control weight; helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints; strengthens older persons and enables them to move about better without falling; and promotes psychological well-being.

More recently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have recommended how much physical activity everyone should try to get. According to that report (www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/index.html):

- At least twice a week, adults should do muscle-strengthening work on all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms).

- Adults also should get at least 2 ½ hours (150 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise, such as brisk walking, each week. The activity should make your heart beat faster and make you breathe harder.
- Adults who exercise more vigorously with activities such as jogging or playing basketball can get similar health benefits with at least 1 ¼ hours (75 minutes) of vigorous aerobic exercise each week.
- You don't have to get all your weekly activity at once. Physical activity can be beneficial even if done for as little as 10 minutes at a time. Three brisk 10-minute walks taken each day for five days fulfill the 150-minute weekly goal.
- Older adults should strive to get the same amount of aerobic and muscle-strengthening activity each week as younger adults. Physical activity helps prevent health problems that seem to come with old age.
- Children should get 60 minutes of aerobic activity every day. At least three days each week, this should include muscle- and bone-strengthening activities such as running, push-ups, gymnastics, or jumping rope.

It is vital to stay safe when you pursue your physical activity. Helmets are necessary to prevent head injuries when you are bicycling, skating, or rollerblading. If you are exercising on public streets or roads, always watch out for traffic and obey all traffic laws. Make sure you are visible with brightly colored and/or reflective clothing, particularly when it is dark. Tell a responsible person where you are going and when you expect to return, and follow other common-sense safety precautions.

Do many of these things, and chances are your health will benefit greatly.

Healthy Eating Helps Control Weight, Prevent Illness

By KELSEY KUHLMAN M. Ed.

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Healthy lifestyles come in a variety of flavors: Safety is paramount, stress is managed, physical activity is frequent, eating involves healthy foods prepared and served safely, and environmental hazards are avoided. The list could go on and on. However, the impact of healthy eating on one's well-being is endless!

Not only can healthy eating prevent obesity, but it also can prevent various chronic diseases from cancer to heart disease.

So what are some basic food and nutrition tips that everyone (regardless of age) can use to adopt healthy eating patterns? Following healthy eating tips from the list below can help Delaware County residents stay healthy.

- Drink more water

- Drink less soda and juices with added sugars
- Eat more fruit, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins
- Control portions – at every meal!
- Choose low-fat or non-fat dairy products
- Limit consumption of foods with high calories, added sugars, solid fats, and few nutrients, such as milk chocolate candy bars or potato chips

While what we eat as individuals is important, community-wide improvements go a long way to ensure healthier eating habits for the whole community. According to the U.S. Surgeon General, individuals, families, schools, daycare centers, work sites, and businesses should adopt changes that promote and encourage healthy eating. Examples of these include:

- Limiting high fat/high sugar foods in vending machines.
- Adopting nutrition standards for school districts and daycares.
- Ensuring availability of appealing, healthy food options that encourage the consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins.
- Using creative marketing and advertising strategies to promote healthy food choices.
- Increasing support for mothers who choose to breastfeed, the optimal way to nourish an infant.
- Improving access to fresh fruits and vegetables by providing incentives for the production, distribution and procurement of foods from local farms, such as Farmers' Markets.

We at the Delaware General Health District are delighted that a number of our initiatives reach people in the settings mentioned above. We encourage these populations to implement these healthy eating recommendations and lead active lives so our county continues to be one of the healthiest places in the land.

What Makes a Healthy Community?

The Environmental Side

By STEPHANIE DEGENARO R.S.

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Delaware General Health District

Public Health starts with the individual, and the choices that individuals make to keep themselves and their families healthy. But it doesn't stop there. There are many environmental factors that contribute to the overall health and well being of a population.

These include factors that are directly related to disease transmission, such as the safety of the food we eat and the water we drink or swim in. They also involve things like access to safe

parks and trails, wearing seatbelts and properly restraining child passengers on the highways, and using the correct personal protective equipment when biking, skateboarding, or rollerblading.

Some environmental factors, such as outdoor air pollution, are beyond the control of a single individual. However, as an active community member, there are things you can do to help maintain a healthy environment for yourself and your family:

- Make sure all child passengers are in the correct restraint—either a car seat or booster seat – whenever you drive anywhere. Lead by example by wearing your seatbelt every time you get in the car.
- Never drink and drive, and never drive while distracted. Pull over if you must answer or dial a phone or read or send a text message.
- Help preserve parks and trails! Use them whenever possible, and help to keep them litter free! Reuse or Recycle whenever possible!
- Encourage children to be active, but make sure they are wearing the appropriate protective gear -- a properly fitted bike helmet, elbow or knee pads, etc.
- Tobacco smoke is toxic, causes breathing problems and long-term chronic diseases, and is no longer allowed in nearly all public places and workplaces in the State of Ohio. Children and other human beings should not be exposed to it; neither should pets.
- Use public swimming pools responsibly. Monitor children closely, follow all posted pool rules or directions from pool staff, and if something doesn't appear correct, ask! You can always call the health district (740-368-1700) to discuss your concern with an inspector.
- Be safe preparing your food! When grilling out, be sure to keep raw foods and cooked foods separate, and refrigerate leftovers as quickly as possible. When grocery shopping in hot weather, consider bringing coolers and ice packs along to keep foods cold for the ride home. Use a food thermometer and a guide to safe cooking temperatures. Wash your hands frequently. Again, we welcome your calls and questions!
- If your home is served by a private well, you may want to have the water tested to ensure it is safe for consumption.
- If your home is not served by a central sewer system, make sure your home sewage treatment system is checked regularly and working properly.

Every day, Environmental Health professionals are working to identify and control factors in the environment that can affect the health of the public. With your help and cooperation, we can continue our success!

What Makes a Healthy Community?

By JOYCE RICHMOND RN, BS
Director of Nursing

Delaware General Health District

The way you think, what you eat, where you work, where you live, what you do, your financial situation -- these things all play a part in leading a healthy lifestyle. And it goes without saying that living a healthy lifestyle is much easier said than done. A healthy lifestyle is a continual and life-long process -- a course that everyone must chart for themselves.

Taking responsibility for your own health is the first step toward healthy living. Taking charge of your own health care is empowering and psychologically beneficial. Get regular medical check-ups. If you have medical problems, talk to your doctor and discuss the options. Get another opinion if you still have questions.

Other steps on the path to healthful living include:

- Do everything in moderation -- eating, working, resting, playing, maintaining hobbies, socializing, etc.
- Do what you love. Studies show that people at peace with their lives and life's work live longer.
- Reduce the amount of toxins you put in your body; Smoking, drinking, and eating salty processed foods have detrimental effects on your health and life.
- Be connected. A Finnish study has shown that those who were lonely and isolated socially were two to three times more likely to die from heart disease. Making friends or owning a pet could prove a lifesaver.
- Try to be of service to others. Helping others is very self-gratifying and improves mental health.
- Sleep for at least 8 hours every night. Sleep refreshes your mind and body.
- Keep your life simple and live within your means. Reducing stressors adds quality years to your life.
- Eat well and healthy. Learn to cook; make meals interesting and fun.
- Exercise regularly. Find a reasonably vigorous exercise program you love and stick with it. Just 30 minutes of exercise everyday will add years to your life.
- Make your home a sanctuary. Surround yourself with supportive people, pets, and things that you love.

So take charge of your health earlier rather than later, and set your course to a healthful, happy, fulfilling life. It may be easier said than done, but the payoff of extra quality years is well worth the effort.

What Public Health Does (and What You Should Do!)

By JESSE CARTER
Public Information Officer

Delaware General Health District

A clever animated video posted by our partners at www.generationpublichealth.org tells viewers, “This is what Public Health does.” It’s part of that organization’s campaign to turn the U.S. into the healthiest nation in the world over the next generation.

The video tells how various Public Health measures affect one boy’s life, from birth until adulthood and the birth of his own first child. When the boy is young, a bike helmet protects his brain, and fluoride protects his teeth. When he is 13, he says no to smoking because he has learned how bad it is for his health. When he takes up running, it’s safe because health-conscious community leaders built trails in local parks. When he gets in a car, he always wears seat belts.

And when he has his own daughter, he knows to teach her to eat right, be active, brush her teeth, not smoke, and wear a seat belt – because he learned those things from his family, his clinic, his doctor, his nurses, and his community, the video says.

Delaware Countians, we learned in February, are among Ohio’s best at following Public Health advice for healthy and safe lives. County-by-county health rankings issued by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation showed Delaware County leading or among the top counties in a number of important measurements. Delaware County ranked first in Ohio in mortality (length of life), education, employment, income, family and social support, and community safety. Delaware County ranked second best in Ohio in healthy behaviors, fourth in clinical care, and fifth in morbidity (a measurement of relative sickness and quality of life).

How can individual residents stay healthy and help keep our healthiest-population-in-Ohio status? We have been giving you that advice all week, but these things are key (and if we’re repeating some, they bear repeating):

- Don’t smoke, binge drink, drink and drive, or use drugs illicitly.
- Protect your children with timely immunizations, properly installed car seats and booster seats (now required in Ohio for all kids up to age 8 and up to 4 feet 9 inches tall), and helmets strapped on their heads whenever they are bicycling, skateboarding, or skating.
- Get plenty of physical activity, eat lots of fruits and vegetables, and maintain a healthy weight.
- See a doctor for a wellness check (or “physical,” if you prefer) once each year.
- Get regular cholesterol and blood glucose screenings, and know your numbers. Follow your doctor’s recommendations to stay in the healthy ranges.
- Get timely cancer screenings. Women need Pap tests (Cervical Cancer screening) regularly starting at 21 or within three years of onset of sexual activity. Women should get mammograms every 1-2 years starting at age 40. Age 50 is the time for men and women to start getting Colorectal Cancer screenings.

This concludes our National Public Health Week series of articles. We are proud to support this year’s theme, “A Healthier America – One Community at a Time.” It echoes a vision that we have painted on the wall of our Delaware General Health District training room, reminding us daily about what we are working for: “Healthy People, Healthy Habits, Healthy Communities!”

