

# Your Health Your Life

A Woman's Health  
Newsletter  
by the Atlantic County  
Division of Public Health

January - March, 2006

## 2006... A New Start to Good Health

It's 2006, another new year and another new chance to make some positive changes in your life. There's a lot you can do to improve your health (or keep your existing good health). Each year, most of us make New Year's resolutions. But healthy resolutions aren't just for New Year's Day, but for every day of the year.

In her publication "Making Healthy Choices, Keeping Healthy Habits," Mardi Richmond offers some of the best things everyone can do for their health. Check off the ones you already do, then pick a couple you can start doing today to improve your health. And remember, be realistic, start easy, look for progress not perfection, get support, and reward your successes!

- Don't Smoke.
- Exercise every day.
- Eat 5-9 servings of fruits and veggies.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Manage stress.
- Drink 5-8 glasses of water every day.
- Get regular check-ups.
- Don't drink and drive.
- Spend time with friends and family.
- Drive the speed limit and wear your seatbelt.

## National Health Observances

- January:** Cervical Health Awareness Month  
Thyroid Awareness Month  
National Glaucoma Awareness Month
- February:** Heart Month  
National Women's Heart Day  
National Wear Red Day 2006
- March:** National Nutrition Month  
National Kidney Month  
National Poison Prevention Week - 19-25

Wishing you a Happy & Healthy New Year



## Celebrate National Women's Heart Day... February 17, 2006

Do you know that women's heart disease is the number one killer of women in the United States? One out of every three women will die of heart disease. That's the bad news...but the good news is that women's heart disease is often preventable.

**Who is at risk?** The major risk factors for heart disease include high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, obesity and being overweight, physical inactivity and smoking. All are controllable. Other risk factors include diabetes, family history of heart disease and age. Check out these facts:

- Women who smoke risk having a heart attack 19 years earlier than non-smoking women.
- Women with diabetes are 2 to 3 times more likely to have a heart attack than women without diabetes.

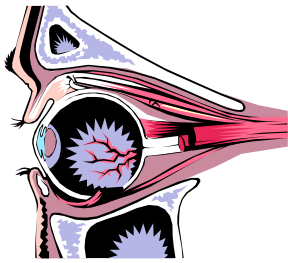
- African American women are 72 percent more likely to suffer from heart disease than white women.
- More female Hispanic Americans die from heart disease and stroke than cancer, diabetes and accidents combined.

### What can you do to prevent heart attacks?

- Get regular screenings
- Stop Smoking
- Increase your physical activity level and adopt a healthy diet
- Watch your weight—it's not just about your looks!



## Glaucoma, Are You At Risk?



Glaucoma is an eye disease that causes loss of sight by damaging a part of the eye called the optic nerve. This nerve sends information from your eyes to your brain. When glaucoma damages your optic nerve, you begin to lose patches of vision, usually side vision (peripheral vision). Over time, glaucoma may also damage straight ahead (central) vision. You may not notice a loss of side vision until you have lost a great deal of your sight.

When checking for glaucoma, eye doctors usually look for damage to the optic nerve and any loss of side vision. They may also check your eye pressure.

Glaucoma is often called "the sneak thief of sight." That's because people usually do not notice any signs of the disease until they have already lost significant vision. Once lost, vision can't be restored. More than 2 million Americans age 40 and older have open angle glaucoma, the most common form of glaucoma. At least half don't even know they have it.

### These risk factors may increase your chance of having glaucoma:

- Age – The older you are, the greater your risk.
- Race – African-Americans have glaucoma four to five times more often than others. African-Americans are also likely to have glaucoma at a younger age.
- Family history – If you have a parent, brother or sister with glaucoma, you are more likely to get glaucoma. If you have glaucoma, your family members should get complete eye exams.
- Medical history – Diabetes, previous eye injuries, eye surgery or long-term steroid use can increase your risk of glaucoma.

Anyone can get glaucoma. Glaucoma affects one in 200 people age 50 and younger. The rate increases to one in 10 over the age of 80.

So what can you do? The best thing is to get regular eye exams to check for glaucoma. It may not be preventable or curable, but if diagnosed early and with the right treatment, it can be controlled and blindness can be prevented.



## Nutrition Exploration....What's On Your Plate?

National Nutrition Month is a nutrition education and information campaign sponsored annually by the American Dietetic Association. The campaign is designed to focus attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits.

In celebration of National Nutrition Month, why not experience a new cuisine? Chances are, many of your meals now reflect foods from all over the world—Indonesia, Cuba, Greece, Russia, and beyond. As communities around the world grow closer and share cultural customs, our taste in food has also become more international. This trend now influences where we eat and how we cook.


Exploring the foods of other cultures can be fun. The food is flavorful and the options are often light and healthful. Many countries rely more on plant foods than high-fat ingredients. They emphasize well-balanced nutrition based on simple, wholesome staples—grains, beans, vegetables and fruit and only small amounts of meat. Using these types of recipes will also help increase your intake of fruits and vegetables allowing

you to get your minimum amount of "5-A-Day" servings.

To refresh your memory, the 5-A-Day campaign encourages you to eat a minimum of 5-9 servings of fruits and vegetables per day.

And while we're on the subject of servings, take a look at your portion sizes. Has your waistline expanded along with your food portions? If so, remember that portion control = weight control. By reducing your serving sizes, you automatically reduce calories. It's the easiest weight loss plan to follow. Here are some simple suggestions for achieving portion control:

- Share super-sized restaurant servings with your fellow diners.
- Save leftovers for another meal.
- Don't overeat. Thinking you can eat less later doesn't always work.
- Slow down and savor your food.
- Instead of mindlessly chewing away, notice when your hunger is gone and stop eating.

 **Wellness Tip of the Quarter:** Be proactive about your health. Don't wait for something to go wrong. Get regular screenings and tests. To find out more about any information in this newsletter or about any of the services offered by the Atlantic County Division of Public Health, please call 609-645-5935.



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

Atlantic County Executive Dennis Levinson. Atlantic County Board of Chosen Freeholders, Joseph F. Silipena, Chairman