

# Your Health Your Life

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

January - March, 2007

## Happy New Year!!!

Many of you have already made your New Year's resolutions. You've probably joined a gym (or started using your membership again), broken out your walking shoes, or vowed to drink 8 glasses of water a day.

Goal setting and making changes seem easy in January. It's all part of the "self-improvement" message that is around every corner this time of year. The hard part is the dedication required to reach your goals—deciding to stick with them through the challenging times! The key to success is making realistic goals. Start with small achievable accomplishments that will make you feel good about your success, and then build on the small goals until you conquer the big ones.

Recognizing and enjoying small successes is one motivator for people who are trying to stick with a resolution. For others, a little competition is what gets them going. Or, you might feel inspiration from someone else who is achieving similar goals. The point is to never give up. Write down your goals, put them in a place where you see them every day, and focus on accomplishments, not failures. Also, write down the following quote and place it where you can see it everyday....

*Never, never, never, never give up. - Winston Churchill*

## National Health Observances

### January:

Cervical Health Awareness Month  
Thyroid Awareness Month  
National Glaucoma Awareness Month

### February:

American Heart Month  
National Women's Heart Day (26th)  
National Wise Health Consumer Month

### March:

National Nutrition Month  
National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

# Welcome 2007

## The Flu: What Women Need to Know: Part 3 of a 3 Part Series. . .

You sneeze and sniff. Your throat is scratchy, your head feels thick and heavy—you'd love to nap, but there isn't time. Maybe later, after you've fixed dinner, walked the dog and washed the dishes.

You've caught a bug all right, the old "something that's going around." Could be a cold. Maybe it's the flu. Either way, women are more likely than men to become infected. We're not more vulnerable, but more often than not we're the primary caretakers for children, who easily pick up "bugs" and then pass them along to us. Additionally, more women than men work in hospitals and nursing homes, where the risk of catching a cold or the flu is high.

The big question is: is it a cold or is it the flu? If you're sneezing and sniffing but your aches are minimal, chances are you've got a cold. If you've got an awful headache, a cough and sore throat, major aches and pains and you're running a fever, it's likely you've been bitten by the flu bug.

Both the flu and colds can be caused by viruses. Once you know the difference between these illnesses you won't confuse the two. While they both share some common symptoms, such as runny nose, sore throat and coughs, the flu is likely to have one or more of the following symptoms: a high fever, an intense headache, strong aches and pains, overall weakness and a serious dry cough.

A cold creeps up on you little by little. And, while you might not feel great, you can still pursue most daily activities. Plus, when it's over, it's over.

The flu, however, strikes quickly, often with debilitating exhaustion. If you have the flu you are usually too sick and weak to go to work, school or even to leave your bed. Even after the severe but short phase passes, you may still feel tired for weeks.

Finally, while the only way to avoid a cold is to stay away from people with colds and to wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water, the single best method of avoiding the flu is to have a vaccination. The Atlantic County Division of Public Health continues to offer flu shots, by appointment, to residents 6 months of age and older for a fee of \$15.00. There is no out of pocket fee for Medicare B recipients who present their Medicare B card. To schedule an appointment call 645-5933. There are also simple common-sense things you can do to protect yourself from the flu:

- **Keep your distance, if possible, from people who have the flu.** The virus is spread when someone who has the flu coughs or sneezes. You should always be careful to cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze.
- **Wash your hands frequently to reduce your risk of catching a cold or flu.** Ordinary soap is sufficient. Antibacterial soaps add little protection, particularly against viruses.



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.

## Early Detection is Key to Preventing Vision Loss from Glaucoma

More than 2 million Americans over the age of 40 have it and there are 65 million suspected cases of it across the globe. Despite the staggering numbers, many of those who do have it don't even know it. The disease is glaucoma, an eye disease that can rob people of their peripheral vision, and if left untreated, can result in total blindness.

Although there are many advances in medicines that can slow the progression of vision loss, there are no cures. Once glaucoma takes away sight, it cannot be restored. It is the second leading cause of blindness in the world.

If you are over the age of 55, you are at risk. In addition, Hispanic, African-American, nearsighted individuals and/or those who have ever had a serious eye injury are all at risk for the disease. There are even cases of infants being diagnosed with glaucoma.

Many people with glaucoma are not aware they have it because, in the early stages, there may be no detectable symptoms. However, according to the American Academy of

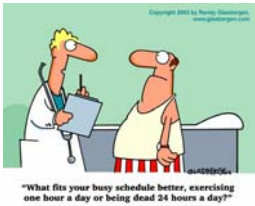
Ophthalmology, over time patients may experience:

- Blurred vision
- Diminished peripheral vision (or "tunnel vision")
- Difficulty focusing on objects
- Appearance of halos around lights.

In an effort to prevent the effects of undiagnosed glaucoma, everyone should get a dilated eye exam regularly. If you are diagnosed with glaucoma, many treatment options exist and the earlier glaucoma is detected, the sooner sight can be saved. For more information visit:

[www.preventblindness.org/glaucoma](http://www.preventblindness.org/glaucoma).

To help you get started on your way to prevention, remember, the Atlantic County Division of Public Health offers preventive screenings in our: Live Stronger, Longer Clinic; Women's Health Clinic and Men's Health Clinic. To schedule an appointment or for more information call us at: 609-645-5933.



## Winter Fitness... It's Hot!!

Winters are cold, dark and slippery. That's why bears hibernate in winter and why humans have the urge to do the same. The big difference: bears burn up their body fat when curled up and when we curl up for the winter it's usually with snack foods and sodas in front of the TV. As a result, we emerge from our dens with extra pounds and out-of-shape bodies.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), one third of Americans are almost completely inactive during the winter months. This year let's break the hibernation habit! For starters, exercise is a great way to fight off the winter doldrums. Vigorous physical activity will rev up your energy level and elevate your mood. It will reduce the stress and anxiety that build up and will boost your body's natural defenses against the flu and the common cold.

Cardiac fitness is especially important during the winter, since there are an estimated 53% more heart attacks during the winter as

compared to summer. Heart attacks are a special danger to out-of-shape people who suddenly step outside for a vigorous session of snow-shoveling. And, if you stay in shape through the winter, you will be less likely to hurt yourself in the spring.

Are you persuaded? If so, here are some suggestions:

1. Walk indoors: use a treadmill or indoor track, join the mall walkers or plot out a course in your house.
2. Join a health club or local YMCA where you can find stationary bikes, weights, and pools.
3. Rent, check out or purchase an exercise video - and use it.
4. Take up a winter sport like skiing or ice skating.

There are many options. For more ideas and information, visit the CDC website, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), and type the words "physical fitness" in the search box.

### Wellness Tip of the Quarter: A cool tip from the CDC...

Taking preventive action is your best defense against having to deal with extreme cold-weather conditions. By preparing your home and car in advance for winter emergencies, and by observing safety precautions during times of extremely cold weather, you can reduce the risk of weather-related health problems.



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.