

Your Health Your Life

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

October - December, 2008

Stay healthier, One hand wash at a time. . .

Keeping your hands clean is one of the best ways to keep from getting sick and spreading illnesses. Cleaning your hands gets rid of germs you pick up from other people, from the surfaces you touch and from the animals you come in contact with. But according to a recent telephone survey by the Soap and Detergent Association, only about 85% of people wash their hands after using the bathroom. While most people know that clean hands are the best defense against illness, here are the simple rules to follow:

When to Wash:

- Before eating.
- Before, during and after handling or preparing food.
- After contact with blood or body fluids (like nasal secretions or saliva).
- After changing a diaper.
- After you use the bathroom.
- After handling animals, their toys, leashes, or waste.
- After touching something that could be contaminated.
- Before inserting contact lenses.
- More often when someone in your home is sick.
- Whenever they look dirty.

How to Wash:

- Wet your hands and apply soap.
- Rub hands together vigorously to make a lather and scrub all surfaces.

- Continue for 20 seconds! It takes that long for the soap and scrubbing to dislodge and remove germs. Need a timer? Sing "Happy Birthday" all the way through - twice!
- Rinse hands well under running water.
- Dry your hands using a paper towel or air dryer.
- If possible, use your paper towel to turn off the faucet.

National Health Observances

October:

National Breast Cancer Awareness Month
Healthy Lung Month
National Health Education Month

November:

American Diabetes Month
National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month
Great American Smoke Out - 20th

December:

National Hand washing Month

Forgetful or Alzheimer's Disease. . .

The purpose of this list is to alert the public to the early warning signs of one of the most devastating disorders affecting older people — Alzheimer's disease. If someone has several or even most of these symptoms, it does not mean they definitely have the disease. It does mean they should be thoroughly examined by a medical specialist trained in evaluating memory disorders, such as a neurologist or a psychiatrist, or by a comprehensive memory disorder clinic, with an entire team of expert knowledge about memory problems.

The seven warning signs of Alzheimer's disease are:

1. Asking the same question over and over again.
2. Repeating the same story, word for word, again and again.
3. Forgetting how to cook, or how to make repairs, or how to play cards — activities that were previously done with ease and regularity.
4. Losing one's ability to pay bills or balance one's checkbook.

5. Getting lost in familiar surroundings, or misplacing household objects.
6. Neglecting to bathe, or wearing the same clothes over and over again, while insisting that they have taken a bath or that their clothes are still clean.
7. Relying on someone else, such as a spouse, to make decisions or answer questions they previously would have handled themselves.



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.

Overcoming the fear. . .

If you're scared that you will one day hear the words, "you have breast cancer," you've got plenty of company. Breast cancer is the most feared cancer among women. Sometimes, it's not just the word "cancer" that's at the root of the fear, but dread of issues associated with treating cancer, such as surgical complications and medication side effects. Perhaps you've been through a breast cancer diagnosis with someone close to you and know how difficult it can be.

While these are understandable fears, the danger is that some women are so overwhelmed with anxiety that they postpone screenings, such as breast exams and mammograms, or even skip them altogether for fear of bad news. Yet these are the very examinations that can help save lives by finding cancer early on, when it's most treatable.

The reality is that as you age, your risk for developing breast cancer increases. Most of us know women who have battled breast cancer. Advances in methods of detection and treatments have transformed breast cancer from what had been considered a dreaded disease—what some perceived as a death sentence—to one that most women can and do beat. In fact, when breast cancer is found at its earliest, most treatable stage, a majority of women (98 percent) will go on to live full, healthy lives after treatment. So, it's important to keep up with recommended screenings and exams.

It's important for you to talk with your health care provider to learn about your personal risk of developing breast cancer so that you can decide how to stay on top of your breast health. While you're at it, ask about lung cancer and heart disease, too—these are the leading causes of death among women. And don't forget periodic breast self exams. Many women neglect doing these exams for fear of ending up in the doctor's office every month with a new lump and bump, but it's important that you get to know your breasts over time so you notice any changes.



“Why should you care about diabetes?” . . .

November is American Diabetes Month, a time to communicate the seriousness of diabetes and the importance of proper diabetes control. This year the American Diabetes Association asks “Why should you care about diabetes?” in an effort to raise awareness about the disease and its serious consequences such as heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, blindness and amputations.

According to the American Diabetes Association (ADA), 23.6 million people in this country have diabetes or 7.8% of the population. If this trend continues, one out of three Americans and one out of two minorities born after 2000, will develop diabetes in their lifetime.

This year the ADA wants to communicate the following key messages during American Diabetes Month:

- Since 1987, the death rate due to diabetes has increased 45%, while the death rates due to heart disease, stroke and cancer have declined.

- Keeping blood glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol in control can make a difference in reducing your chances of heart attack or stroke.
- Annual dilated eye exams, routine foot exams and blood pressure checks can prevent blindness, heart disease, amputations, kidney disease and stroke.

The ADA is the source for diabetes information. Call 1-800-DIABETES or visit www.diabetes.org for information and materials.



Wellness Tip of the Quarter: Protect Your Health With a Flu Shot from the Atlantic County Division of Public Health!

To learn more, call the Atlantic County Division of Public Health at 609-645-5933, the Flu Vaccination Hotline at 609-677-5720 or visit our website at www.aclink.org.

