

Healthy January Reminders

Courtney J. Schoessow, MPH, Extension Program Specialist B Texas Cooperative Extension, and Meghan Wernicke with Texas Cooperative Extension Family and Consumer Sciences have put together a wonderful reminder of how important it is to make our health a priority in 2008. Let's all follow their advice and get the New Year started off right!

Taking part in regular physical activity is one of the greatest things you can do for your health. Set a goal to engage in moderate-intensity physical activity for at least 30 minutes a day, at least five days a week. Moderate-intensity exercise means that breathing is heavier than normal, but you do not have to be sprinting B you can be briskly walking. Are your children getting enough exercise? The American Cancer Society recommends that children and adolescents participate in moderate to vigorous physical activity at least 60 minutes a day, at least five days a week. Encourage children to spend less time in front of a television or computer screen and more time playing outside or participating in sports.

When was the last time you went to the doctor for a wellness check when you weren't sick? Depending on your age and gender, there are screening tests that are recommended by your doctor to keep you healthy. Talk to your doctor about which tests are right for you. Both men and women will need to have their BMI (body mass index) checked to make sure they are not overweight. Everyone's blood pressure should be checked every two years. Cholesterol levels should be checked every year starting at the age of 35, or earlier for people with other risk factors for high cholesterol. Screening for colorectal cancer should be done at the age of 50 and be repeated every five or ten years depending on the test used.

All women should begin getting a pap test to screen for cervical cancer beginning at the age of 21, or three years after the beginning of intercourse, whichever comes first. Screening should be done every year; depending on your age and results of past tests, your doctor may decide you can be screened less frequently. As part of breast cancer prevention and early detection, all women should be aware of their breasts and be able to quickly report any changes they may notice to their health care provider. Women in their 20s and 30s should have a clinical breast exam roughly every three years. Beginning at age 40, yearly mammograms and clinical breast exams are recommended.

Men should start being screened for prostate cancer beginning at age 50. Men with strong risk factors for prostate cancer, such as a strong family history of prostate cancer and those who are African American, are recommended to begin screening at the age of 45. Men at an even higher risk, having multiple risk factors, are recommended to begin screening at the age of 40.

Make the decision to talk to your doctor and make sure you are up to date on all of your screening tests in the New Year.

Texas Cooperative Extension and the Texas Cancer Council remind you to bring in the New Year with the decision to live a healthier lifestyle by making healthy everyday choices and making sure you and your family are up to date on recommended screening practices.