

HealthSTAT focus

Health & Wellness Information
to Improve your Condition

February is Wise Health Care Consumer Month

A wise health care consumer is a physically and emotionally healthy consumer, and February is Wise Health Care Consumer Month. The American Institute of Preventive Medicine, like the Center for Mental Health Services, develops and implements programs designed to prevent ill health and reduce health care costs.



Charges	Minus Charges Pending	Minus Charges Excluded
88.00		14.20
80.00		24.90

Programs that focus on self-care, smoking cessation, weight control, stress management, to name a few, are designed with the wise health consumer in mind. These show the consumer how to make healthy lifestyle choices and live a long, healthy and productive life. There is ongoing research to understand the relationship between the mind and body with regards to the effect of stress on our

health. While there are no firm findings on this as yet, it is well known that our mental health can have an effect on our physical health and vice versa. During this month we must all start or renew our efforts to build healthier minds and bodies. Make healthy choices for yourself and your family when choosing doctors, health insurance and online health information. Choose a healthy lifestyle that suits your individual needs and do everything in moderation.

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Where Are You with Your New Year's Resolutions?



Every December, millions of people begin writing their many New Year's resolutions -

planning behavioral changes they want to make during the coming year. Typically, resolutions include high-payback targets such as tobacco cessation and weight loss as well as increased fitness activity, stress management and financial planning.

During the New Year, we believe we will be able to tackle our goals effortlessly. But, after the rush of the New Year's celebration fades and reality sets in, ambitious resolutions often seem unattainable. Soon after, we rationalize that "it's just not a good time of year" due to weather and all of our other obligations. We justify that "when Spring comes, I will really get into shape." In freeing ourselves of the guilt, we can justify putting off habit changes for another few months.

However, when spring arrives, chances are we will have another temporary surge of motivation, only to abandon it within a few weeks. To make your New Year's resolutions a reality, focus on resolution support.

Making and attaining your resolution goals is easier when you use the framework of the four dimensions of wellness: 1) physical, 2) social, 3) emotional, and 4) spiritual. To be lasting, change has to become a part of all of the dimensions of your life.

Why do people abandon their resolutions? One reason is they become discouraged when results don't come quickly enough, or when they encounter obstacles they had not anticipated.

Behavioral change requires sustained effort and commitment, and can be achieved with good preparation and an action plan.

**People do not plan to fail;
they simply fail to plan.**

If you want to change, you need to prepare and plan for the change and ACT like you are changing. If you need assistance in keeping your New Year's resolutions, visit your **HealthSTAT** clinic. Your clinic practitioner can assist you with planning, and working toward, health and wellness goals. In addition, your clinic practitioner is a great source of advice and ideas, and can measure your success in making good changes throughout the year.

CDC Recommends HIV Testing for all Americans Age 13-64 to Prevent Spread of AIDS



ATLANTA (AP) - All Americans between the ages of 13 and 64 should be routinely tested for HIV to help catch infections earlier and stop the spread of the deadly virus, according to federal health recommendations announced in 2006.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said HIV testing should become about as common as a cholesterol check. Nearly half of new HIV infections are discovered when doctors are trying to diagnose a sick patient who has come for care, CDC officials said.

"We know that many HIV infected people seek health care and they don't get tested. And many people are not diagnosed until late in the course of their illness, when they're already sick with HIV-related conditions," said Dr. Timothy Mastro, acting director of the CDC's division of HIV-AIDS prevention. "By identifying people earlier through a screening program, we'll allow them to access life-extending therapy, and also through prevention services, learn how to avoid transmitting HIV infection to others," he said.

The announcement was hailed by some HIV patient advocates and health policy experts. They said the guidelines could help end the stigma of HIV testing and lead to needed care for an estimated 250,000 Americans who don't yet know they have the disease. "I think it's an incredible advance. I think it's courageous on the part of the CDC," said A. David Paltiel, a health policy expert at the Yale University School of Medicine. The recommendations aren't legally binding, but they influence what doctors do and what health insurance programs cover.

Some physicians groups predict the recommendations will be challenging to implement, involving new expenditures of money and time for testing, counseling and revising consent procedures. Some physicians also question whether there is enough evidence to expand testing beyond high-risk groups, said Dr. Larry Fields, the president of the American Academy of Family Physicians.

"Are doctors going to do it? Probably not," Fields said. But the recommendations were endorsed by the American Medical Association, which urged physicians to comply.

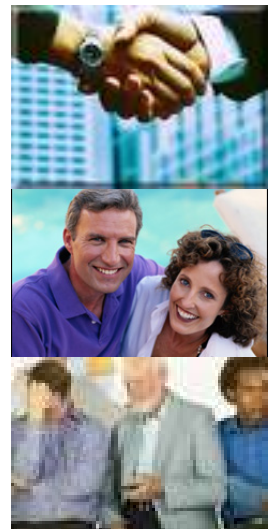
"This is important public health strategy to stop the spread of HIV," Dr. Nancy Nielsen, a Buffalo, N.Y.-based physician who sits on the AMA's governing board, said in a statement. Previously, the CDC recommended routine testing for those at high-risk for catching the virus, such as intravenous drug users and gay men, and for hospitals and certain other institutions serving areas where HIV is common. It also recommends testing for all pregnant women. Under the new guidelines, patients would be tested for HIV as part of a standard battery of tests they receive when they go for urgent or emergency care, or even during a routine physical. Patients wouldn't get tested every year: Repeated, annual testing would only be recommended for those at high-risk. There would be no consent form specifically for the HIV test; it would be covered in a clinic or hospital's standard care consent form. Patients would be allowed to decline the testing.

Leading Causes of Death for Men *(see focus on Men's Health on the next page)*

All Races, Males	Percent
1. Heart Disease	28.4%
2. Cancer	24.1%
3. Unintentional Injuries	5.8%
4. Stroke	5.2%
5. Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease	5.1%
6. Diabetes	2.9%
7. Flu & Pneumonia	2.4%
8. Suicide	1.9%
9. Kidney Disease	1.6%
10. Chronic Liver Disease	1.5%

Men don't have to become statistics! Men can take charge of their health status and avoid many of these causes of death.

If you are at risk for any of the preventable causes of death listed in the table, see your HealthSTAT clinic practitioner to discuss an action plan to reduce your risks.





Top 10 Health Concerns of Men



Men are catching up to women in life expectancy, according to a 2006 National Center for Health Statistics report. If current trends continue, in 50 years, men and women will live the same length of time.

No matter how much you know about men's health, there's always room to know more about ways to a better lifestyle, the top men's health concerns, and the importance of getting medical care and regular screening tests. Many of the major health risks that men face can be prevented and treated if they are diagnosed early. **Why? Some reasons include:**

- Men tend to smoke and drink more than women and generally have less healthy lifestyles.
- Men do not seek medical help as often as women.
- Men tend to join in fearless, risky, dangerous behaviors more than women.
- Men also largely define themselves by their work, which adds to stress and to being disconnected from their emotional side. This can add to problems in relationships, as well as in jobs and careers.

Women also play an important role in the health care of their men through education and awareness. Many surveys have been done to see where people get their

health information. For women, it's usually from their doctors, the television, the Internet, and printed materials. For men in these same surveys, wives, girlfriends, and/or mothers are the source of most of their health information. Although overall life expectancy for men is looking good, the male population still has some unique concerns. Research shows:

Despite recent declines in heart disease in the general population, the mortality rate for African American men, aged 35 to 44 years, is more than twice that for White men.

An estimated one-third of men with type 2 diabetes (most common form of diabetes) don't know they have it. Many are unaware of the disease until they develop problems such as impotence (erectile dysfunction), vision loss, or kidney disease.

Men commit suicide four times as often as women do, partly because they're more likely to use deadlier means — such as firearms — when they set out to take their own lives.

Taking time to de-stress and look after your mental and physical health is not a luxury, it's a necessity. A healthier, happier you makes you a better spouse, father, and friend.

The leading causes of death for males follow, but you don't have to become a statistic if you take good care of your health.

See *Leading Causes of Death for Men* on the Previous Page



Quest for Success: Finding an Exercise Program that Works for You

Source: (www.healthwomen.org)

focus on Women's Health



Your best friend loves her step aerobics class. One of your co-workers swears by bike riding. And your cousin rarely misses her morning run at the local school track. All these people swear you'd benefit from their favorite activity. But which of those exercise programs—if any—would really be right for you?

This is the time of year when you might be thinking about beginning a new plan for physical activity. You could be an exercise drop-out or are ready to switch from what you've been doing. You may even have been procrastinating for a long time about starting to exercise.

Jumping into a program because someone else loves it isn't the answer. "Unfortunately, exercise is hard, and it's not a one-size-fits-all phenomenon," says Danielle Symons Downs, PhD, assistant professor of kinesiology and obstetrics & gynecology and director of the Exercise Psychology Laboratory at The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA.

The proof of that truth is found lurking in closets everywhere—as barely-used hand weights, Pilates mats and swim goggles gather dust in memory of good intentions gone awry. Indeed, as many as 50 percent of women who begin an exercise program drop out during the first three to six months.

Finding a plan you enjoy and are able to stick with takes more than just luck—it takes careful choice. You'll have a better chance of succeeding with exercise if you take the time to ask yourself these vital questions:

What's my current health picture? Conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, asthma, cancer or obesity won't keep you from exercising, but you may need to choose your activity and pace carefully. Talk with your HealthSTAT clinic practitioner or other health care professional first. Start slowly, with shorter sessions at lower exertion levels. Warm up briefly and do gentle stretches afterward to avoid injury.

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Wise Health Care Consumer Month – continued from Page 1**The Surgeon General's prescription for health recommends:**

- moderate physical activity, 5 days a week, 30 minutes a day;
- avoid toxins - tobacco, illicit drugs, alcohol abuse
- eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables a day;
- practice responsible sexual behaviors.

Being a Wise Health Care Consumer requires you to ask questions and understand what you are purchasing, even if your insurance is paying for it. If you do not understand what your doctor or other health care provider is proposing as treatment, ask and keep asking until you understand.

Source: <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/highlights/2002/february/wiseconsumer>

Here are a few tips for being a wiser consumer:

- Use regular primary care office visits instead of urgent care or the emergency room.
- Check to see if generics are available for the prescriptions you use. This can save you considerable money.
- When starting on a new medication get a small quantity from the pharmacy until you know you can tolerate the medication. If you get a large quantity and cannot take it, it cannot be returned.



If you are unsure about a treatment or procedure that has been proposed, check in with your HealthSTAT clinic practitioner. They can help you better understand what has been proposed and what to expect.

Focus on Women's Health, continued from page 3

Why do I want to be more physically active? If exercise is appealing because you're hoping to look better, you may be setting yourself up for discouragement. "One of the pitfalls of focusing on improved appearance is that physical changes in weight and muscle tone take much longer and require more effort than might be expected," says Christy Greenleaf, PhD, assistant professor of kinesiology, health promotion and recreation, University of North Texas, Denton, TX. When that goal isn't reached quickly enough, Dr. Greenleaf says, people don't stick with their exercise plan.

What do I consider exercise? Do you think of exercise as a tortuous hour of high-intensity aerobics or knee-pounding jogging? That negative picture takes a toll on your determination to be active. You'll get a good workout from gentler activities, such as walking, gardening or using an impact-free elliptical machine. To heighten the fun factor, choose an activity you find interesting and keep your sessions short, especially when starting out (10 or 15 minutes per session, to add up to 30 minutes on days you exercise).

How committed am I to doing this activity regularly? It's important to consider the source of your commitment to exercise—are you doing it for yourself or because other people are telling you to do it? Having a self-driven commitment will help you find ways to keep your program going.

How convenient is this exercise program for my life and schedule? You may have loved swimming in college, but finding a block of time to get to a pool, change, swim, shower and change again might not fit into your life right now. Expense, distance from your home or work, and availability are other factors in judging the convenience of the exercise program you're considering. Instead of giving up on the idea of physical activity, think about making it more convenient. Schedule 10 minutes of indoor walking for before the kids get up in the morning or at lunchtime, behind a closed office door.

How would I get back on track if my schedule was disrupted? Evaluate your exercise plan on a week-by-week basis to schedule the best times for activity. Plan for the inevitable by working out what you would do—call a babysitter, change the time you exercise, etc.—if your routine hits a setback. Whatever you do, don't throw in the towel. Just because you missed a day of activity or could not be as active for as long as you had planned does not mean that you should give up or all is lost.

Is there anyone who will exercise with me? When you exercise with another person or a group, that social support can help reinforce your adherence to physical activity.

What can I do to begin? Take the first step by answering these questions and developing a realistic plan for your new program. Set specific, manageable goals, such as walking for a total of 30 minutes (cut into shorter sessions if necessary) on three days each week. Consider potential barriers to being active and how you will deal with them. Bad weather? Find a welcoming indoor environment at a school, mall or even at home. Shuttling kids to their activities? Use the waiting time to walk around the gym or field, do stretches or work with small hand weights. Keep track of when you exercise and why you miss sessions. Review weekly to make changes that will help keep you active. Set more challenging, yet attainable, goals as you progress.

This newsletter is a monthly publication of HealthSTAT, Inc., for its clients and their employees. It is for informational purposes only, and is not intended to replace medical advice.

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