



DOUGLAS COUNTY Healthy Directions Wellness Newsletter

LOOKING BACK AT YEAR ONE OF HEALTHY DIRECTIONS

You can excuse Kathy Goodman for shaking her head in amazement as she looks back at the first year of Healthy Directions, Douglas County's Wellness Program.

Starting something from scratch is never easy, but as Healthy Directions nears its first anniversary, nearly one fourth of the county's employees have taken part.

"What I have learned is employees, for the most part, want a successful wellness program," said Kathy, chairwoman of Healthy Directions. "They want something that keeps them motivated."

Years of frustration came to an end in late 2008 when the County Board gave Goodman the OK to start the program, in part to reduce increased health insurance costs.

It was the right move.

"I constantly run into employees who ask us to keep the program going," she said. "They say it's making a difference."

County employees have responded by taking part in walking challenges, lunch-and-learn sessions, health assessments and now health and wellness screenings. It's an amazing start, especially when you consider how difficult it is for most of us to change our behaviors, but that's exactly what's going on.

"We've motivated and made people aware," Kathy said.

Currently underway is the Healthy Directions needs assessment, in which the committee is surveying employees to learn what they want and need to become successful at improving their health. More than a quarter of the county's workforce responded in the first 10 days of the survey, with ideas to improve the still-new program.

"That will be the roadmap for the Wellness Committee on what will be offered," Kathy said.

That will be followed in April by the second annual United Health Care online health assessment, where employees will answer a series of health questions to give themselves an idea of where they stand and what they should do to improve their overall health factor. Kathy assures everyone it truly is confidential.

And there are more Health and Wellness screenings, done in partnership with the YMCA. Future events are planned for:

What's Inside: January/February 2010

- January is Folic Acid Awareness Month
- How to Get that Second Wind
- Minority Health Group
- Men: Make Health A Priority
- Insomnia: How do I Stay Aleep?
- And more!

Feb. 12: Douglas County Health Center, 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Feb. 17: Douglas County Department of Corrections, 7:30 – 8:30 a.m. and 3 – 4 p.m.

April 7: Douglas County Engineer, Roads, and Sheriff Departments 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

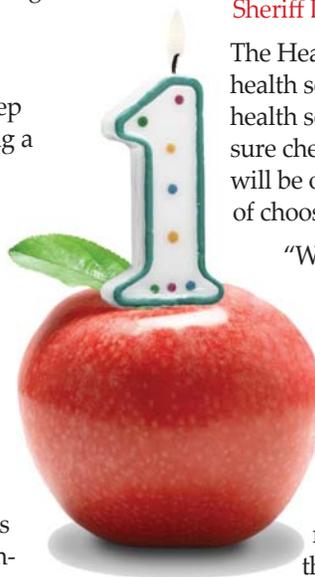
The Health & Wellness Screening includes body composition health screenings, flexibility health screenings, grip strength health screenings, body mass index screenings, blood pressure checks, weight vest tests and lung capacity screenings will be offered. Employees who attend will have the option of choosing one or all of the tests.

"We want to increase employee awareness of their health and wellness," Kathy said.

The program is catching on, she says, and now the City of Omaha wants to meet with Douglas County representatives to learn how Healthy Directions came together and how their employees can start a wellness program of their own or join our effort.

With one year in the books, Healthy Directions is moving forward, and Kathy has some thoughts to share with employees who have yet to join the program.

"The only thing you lose is weight," Kathy said.



PHIL'S

Keep up the great work!

Winter Walking Challenge Extended

Phil Winter Walk Challenge has been extended until March 1st. Turn in your tracking sheets by March 5th to receive the participation gift. Kudos to Phil and his group for staying active during this snowy winter!



COMMIT TO BE FIT

JANUARY IS FOLIC ACID AWARENESS MONTH

You never know what the New Year will bring. So, whether or not you're planning to have a baby this year, (about 50 percent of all pregnancies are unplanned) you can start the new year with habits that will help give a baby a healthy start in life.



January is Folic Acid Awareness Month and a great time to start taking a multivitamin with 400 mcg of the B-vitamin folic acid every day. Starting before pregnancy begins is an important way to reduce the risk of birth defects of the brain or spine called neural tube defects (NTD) by up to 70 percent. NTDs occur in the first weeks of fetal development, often before a woman even knows she is pregnant.

Not only do Latinas have higher rates of NTD-affected pregnancies, they also have the lowest awareness/knowledge about folic acid than women of other race/ethnic groups, and lower consumption of folic acid than white non-Hispanic women.

What is folic acid and why do you need it?

Think you are getting all of the vitamins you need from your diet alone? Think again. Most people don't know that it is hard to get certain vitamins from food alone. Many believe they don't need to take multivitamins because they eat healthy foods. Multivitamins help fill in those nutrition gaps in the diet, especially when it comes to getting enough folic acid.

- Folic acid is an essential B vitamin; therefore, everyone needs it in order to stay in good health.
- Folic acid helps build DNA and your body uses it for cell growth and reproduction, fundamental building block processing and genetic material production. Folic acid is water soluble, therefore it passes through your body very quickly. Taking folic acid every day ensures that you always have it in your system.
- Other than being needed to create and regenerate cells in your body, it also has protective effects.
- Studies show that folic acid reduces the risk of certain cancers; cardiovascular diseases including coronary heart disease and stroke; and cognitive diseases or mental conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, age-related dementia or cognitive decline and depression.
- For women in their childbearing years, it is particularly important to consume 400 mcg of folic acid daily. It has been shown to reduce the risk of neural tube defects (NTDs) in developing babies by up to 70 percent. Since 50 percent of pregnancies are unplanned, it's important to take folic acid every day even if you're not planning to get pregnant. Neural tube defects are birth defects of the brain and spine. The most common are Spina Bifida and anencephaly.

www.folicacidinfo.org

HOW TO GET THAT SECOND WIND

Feeling run-down? You'll turn up the energy in five minutes if you...

Refuel. Snack on fiber-rich munchies such as dried apricots, celery sticks, an apple or a few pistachio nuts. Benefits: the fiber helps control the release of glucose (a sugar) into your bloodstream and may prevent energy dips.

Breathe deeply. Every 1-2 hours, spend 5 minutes inhaling and exhaling deeply. It will help you feel calmer and more mentally focused, with renewed energy.

Take a visual vacation. Close your eyes and mentally escape by imagining a peaceful scene on an island, in a meadow or by the ocean. "Seeing:" yourself relaxed can be rejuvenating.

Snap out of it. Splash cold water on your face or pop a breathe mint - mint flavors are stimulating.

Take a "Good News" inventory. At the end of the day, write down all the good things that happened. You'll be surprised at how much went right. Plus, you'll set yourself up for a good night's sleep...and energize yourself for tomorrow.

TopHealth News



LUNCH-N-LEARN

We Are All Connected

Thurs., Feb. 18 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Legislative Chambers
Sponsored by the
Douglas County Minority Health Team

Our personal beliefs are challenged on a daily basis as we face an ever-changing personal and work environment. The future is founded on societal and economic elements that drive not only our lives, but our destinies.

On Feb. 18, Mr. Stephen Jackson, Health Program Manager for the Nebraska Office of Health Disparities and Health Equity, Congressional District 2, will provide an interactive show to demonstrate how "We Are All Connected."

Mr. Jackson is also Omaha NAACP President, and he will address how he works to provide a cohesive existence between the government agency that employs him and the social justice organization for which he is the primary advocate.

Please join us for a very special "Lunch and Learn" in the Legislative Chamber of the Omaha/Douglas Civic Center.

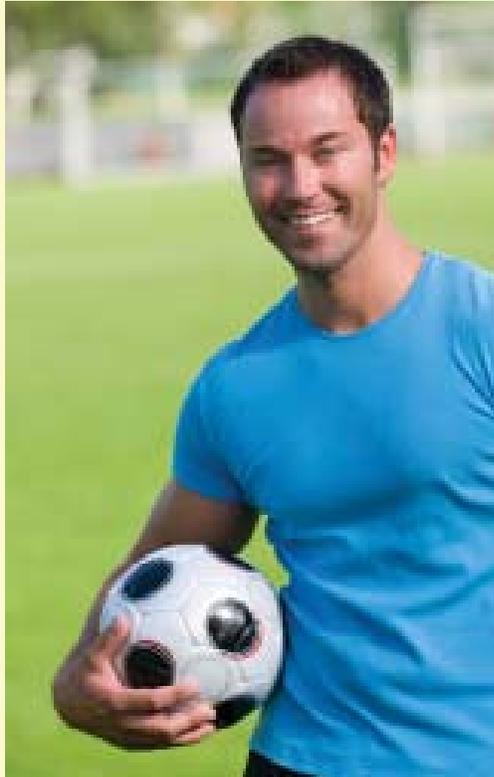
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MEN: MAKE HEALTH A PRIORITY

Guys get a bad rap when it comes to taking care of themselves. Unfortunately, sometimes, it's well-deserved — many men put health screenings and regular checkups low on their to-do lists. In fact, according to the American Academy of Family Physicians, more than one in four men say they wait as long as possible before seeing a doctor, even when they feel ill.

In today's world, that's understandable — work, family and friends can keep you busy 24/7. But, if you invest some time in your good health now, it can pay off big in the long run. Like any investment, however, it takes some planning. These tips may help:

- Get involved. Start by scheduling a checkup. During the visit, tell your doctor everything you know about your health history, including:
- Medicines you're taking, such as over-the-counter medicines and dietary supplements
- Any conditions that have been diagnosed
- Your family health history
- This is the time to bring up any health issues you're having — physical or emotional. Don't hold back, even if it's embarrassing. Doctors have heard it all.
- Be informed. Information is power, and health screenings can help you and your doctor get the facts about your health. Ask about screening for the following conditions. Your doctor will guide you about the frequency that's right for you.
- High cholesterol. Have your lipids checked starting at age 35. You may need to begin earlier if heart disease runs in your family. Talk with your doctor about how often you should be checked.
- High blood pressure. Get tested starting at age 18. Ask your doctor how often you should be tested.
- Diabetes. If you have high cholesterol or your blood pressure is higher than 135/80 mmHg, have your blood sugar checked.
- Colorectal cancer. Screening usually starts at age 50. But, you may need to start sooner if you're at an increased risk, such as if you have a family history of the disease. Your doctor can tell you which method to use and how often to have it done, depending on your risks.
- Abdominal aortic aneurysm. Men between ages 65 and 75 who have ever smoked should be tested.
- Sexually transmitted infections. Ask your doctor if



you need to be screened for diseases such as HIV, gonorrhea, syphilis or chlamydia.

- Take your medicine. If your doctor has prescribed any medicines, be sure to take them as directed. If you're older than age 45, ask your doctor if you should take aspirin to help prevent heart attack.
- Think vaccines. Talk with your doctor about seasonal flu, H1N1 and pneumonia vaccines. Ask if they're right for you. Looking for information about vaccines? Try the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov.

Polish up your healthful habits. To a large extent, your health depends on your daily behaviors. Making healthful lifestyle choices can help cut your risks of many diseases. For example:

- If you smoke, quit. Smoking harms nearly every organ of the body. In addition to talking with your doctor about ways to quit, you can get help at www.smoke-free.gov.
- Step it up. Regular exercise may help you avoid chronic illness, such as heart disease, diabetes and some cancers. Walking can be a good start, too. Also, consider shooting hoops, lifting weights or doing some serious gardening. Aim for at least 2.5 hours of exercise each week. Be sure to talk with your doctor before significantly increasing your level of physical activity.
- Fill your plate — with nutrition. It may be easier than you think to eat healthful foods. Go for plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Choose low-fat or nonfat dairy products and include fish, lean meats and poultry. Beans, eggs and nuts also are good choices.
- Watch your weight. Being overweight is linked to heart disease, high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, osteoarthritis and other serious conditions. Avoid high calorie foods to help keep your weight from climbing. Staying active also helps.
- Go easy on alcohol. Consider not drinking at all. If you do drink, limit it to no more than two drinks a day.

Pat yourself on the back. Taking charge of your health can help you lead a longer and healthier life — and that will benefit your loved ones as well as yourself. So, give yourself credit for a job well done.

Fitness: Add it up. Shorter exercise sessions can add up to a good day's workout. Find out more by visiting myuhc.com. Click "Look Up Health Topics," then enter "exercise" in the search box.

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INSOMNIA: HOW DO I STAY ASLEEP?

Waking up in the middle of the night is called sleep maintenance insomnia, and it's a common problem. These midsleep awakenings often occur during periods of stress, and depression can be a factor. Sleep maintenance insomnia may also be due to sleep apnea or restless legs syndrome.

To help stay asleep through the night, try some of these strategies:

- Set up a quiet, relaxing bedtime routine, such as a warm shower or soft music.
- Do some upper body stretches or gentle yoga to help tight muscles unwind.
- When you wake up in the middle of the night, stay in bed and listen to some soft music or an audiobook with the lights out. This may help you transition back to sleep.
- Put all clocks in your bedroom out of sight. Clock-watching causes stress and makes it harder to fall asleep.
- If you can't fall back asleep within about 20 minutes, go to another room. Read or engage in other quiet activities until you feel sleepy.
- Avoid caffeine after noon, and limit alcohol to one drink several hours before bedtime.
- Make sure to get some exercise — but don't exercise too close to bedtime.
- Go to bed only when you're sleepy.
- Wake up at the same time every day, regardless of how long you sleep.
- Avoid daytime napping.

If the problem continues, talk to your doctor. In order to determine the cause and best treatment for such insomnia, you might need a referral to see a sleep specialist. Over-the-counter sleep aids rarely offer significant help for this problem. Your doctor may prescribe medication and have you try some other strategies to get your sleep pattern back on track.

MayoClinic.com



SIGNS YOU SHOULDN'T IGNORE

Thanks to advances in medicine and education, self-care can remedy many health issues. But some conditions warrant a call to your health care provider:

Examples:

Mysterious changes. Physical symptoms that should be discussed with your provider include continued, unexplained weight loss; persistent or unusual headaches; a sore that won't heal; a change in the color or size of a mole; or a lump or thickening in the breast.

Bleeding. Rectal bleeding, blood in the urine, or blood when you vomit or cough can be signs of something simple (such as hemorrhoids in the case of rectal bleeding), but they can also signal something more serious such as cancerous growths.

Blues you can't beat. If, for a period of two weeks or more, you feel sad or irritable and have lost interest in activities that once gave you pleasure, you may be suffering from depression. Although serious, it is highly treatable, so speak to your provider without delay.

While it's natural to hope something will just go away, early detection of what could possibly be a serious problem can save your life.

TopHealth News

Weight Watchers at the Health Center



Weight Watchers began November 3rd at the Health Center and will continue every Tuesday at 11:30 in Town Hall. This is open to anyone. Price is \$12.00 per meeting. Weigh-in is at 11:30 the meeting starts at 12:00.

HEAR FROM YOU!
We'd like to hear from you! If you have a question or comment for the Healthy Directions committee, e-mail Kathy Goodman at kathy.goodman@douglascounty-ne.gov, drop her a note to Human Resources, Rm 505, or call her at 444-6099.

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FEBRUARY HEALTH & WELLNESS SCREENINGS



FEBRUARY, AMERICAN HEART MONTH

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. The month of February is dedicated to raising awareness about heart disease and increasing knowledge about prevention. Educate yourself on the dangers of heart disease and get on track to better heart health!

Learn more about how to have a healthier heart by logging on line to the American Heart Association's Simple 7 Action Plan. Set goals, assess your needs, and learn sensible ways to have a healthier heart! www.americanheart.org.

The plan covers Life's Simple 7 topics:

- Blood Pressure
- Blood Cholesterol
- Blood Sugar
- Smoking Status
- Healthy Weight
- Physical Activity
- Healthy Diet

A quick quiz produces a final score along with sensible suggestions to help you reach your goals. It's fun, easy, and free!

YOU CAN PREVENT CARBON MONOXIDE EXPOSURE

- Do have your heating system, water heater and any other gas, oil, or coal burning appliances serviced by a qualified technician every year.
- Do install a battery-operated CO detector in your home and check or replace the battery when you change the time on your clocks each spring and fall. If the detector sounds leave your home immediately and call 911.
- Do seek prompt medical attention if you suspect CO poisoning and are feeling dizzy, light-headed, or nauseous.
- Don't use a generator, charcoal grill, camp stove, or other gasoline or charcoal-burning device inside your home, basement, or garage or near a window.
- Don't run a car or truck inside a garage attached to your house, even if you leave the door open.
- Don't burn anything in a stove or fireplace that isn't vented.
- Don't heat your house with a gas oven.

www.cdc.gov

Douglas County Corrections
February 17, 2010
7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.
and 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Douglas County Health Center
February 12, 2010
11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Body Composition Health Screening measures an individual's body fat. Results are given immediately along with educational handouts.

Flexibility Health Screening which is a joint's ability to move through a full range of motion. Some of the benefits are improved physical performance, decreased risk of injury, reduced muscle soreness, improved posture, and increased blood and nutrients to tissues.

Grip Strength Health Screening that measures the muscular strength of your upper extremities.

Body Mass Index Health Screening

Blood Pressure Health Screening

Weight Vest shows the effect of adding 20 additional pounds to your body frame.

Lung Capacity Screening that evaluates how well your lungs work.

Employees can go to each of the booths or any one that they choose.



Brought to you by:
Douglas County Healthy Directions
and the **YMCA**

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to all Douglas County employees. EAP's trained staff can help you with problems that affect your personal or professional life. Services are free to employees and family members, and records are kept confidential and are not included in the staff member's personnel file. Call 593-1711 for an appointment.

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