

January is:

- Birth Defects Prevention Awareness Month
- Cervical Health Awareness Month
- Glaucoma Awareness Month
- Healthy Weight Month
- Thyroid Health Awareness Month



In His Service,



H-3 Ministry

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Jeremiah 29:11



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JUST ONE REQUEST

Dear Master for this coming year
Just one request I bring:
I do not pray for happiness,
Or any earthly thing—
I do not ask to understand
The way Thou ledest me,
But this I ask: Teach me to do
The thing that pleaseth Thee.
I want to know Thy guiding voice,
To walk with Thee each day.
Dear Master make me swift to hear
And ready to obey.
And thus the year I now begin
A happy year will be—
If I am seeking just to do
The thing that pleaseth Thee.

Author Unknown

BIRTH DEFECTS PREVENTION AWARENESS MONTH

Each January the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) raises awareness among women and families on actions they can take to help have a healthy baby. January is also a time to recognize people living with birth defects. Thanks to ongoing medical advances, children born with birth defects are living longer. These children and their families still need help. They often need specialized treatment, continued care, and strong social support to improve their overall quality of life.

Join the nationwide effort to raise awareness of birth defects, their causes, and their impact!

Not all birth defects can be prevented. But you can increase your chances of having a healthy baby by managing health conditions and by adopting healthy behaviors before and during pregnancy. Taking care of yourself and doing what’s best for you is also best for your baby!

BEST FOR YOU. BEST FOR BABY. 5 TIPS FOR PREVENTING BIRTH DEFECTS.

1. Be sure to take 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day.



[Folic acid](#) is important because it can help prevent some major birth defects of the baby's brain and spine. These birth defects develop very early during pregnancy when the neural tube—which forms the early brain and the spinal cord—does not close properly. You need to start taking folic acid at least one month before becoming pregnant and continue during pregnancy. In addition

to eating foods with natural folate, you can:

- Take a vitamin that has folic acid in it every day.
 - Most vitamins sold in the United States have the recommended amount of folic acid women need each day. Check the label on the bottle to be sure it contains 100% of the daily value (DV) of folic acid, which is 400 mcg.
- Eat fortified foods.
 - You can find folic acid in some breads, breakfast cereals, and corn masa flour.
 - Be sure to check the nutrient facts label, and look for one that has “100%” next to folic acid.

2. Book a visit with your healthcare provider before stopping or starting any medicine.



Many women need to take medicine to stay healthy during pregnancy. If you are planning to become pregnant, discuss your current medicines with a healthcare provider, such as your doctor or pharmacist. Creating a treatment plan for your health condition *before* you are pregnant can help keep you and

your developing baby healthy.

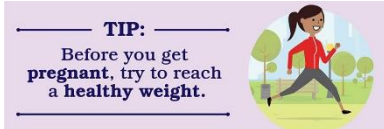
3. Become up-to-date with all vaccines, including the flu shot.



[Vaccines](#) help protect you and your developing baby against serious diseases. Get a flu shot and whooping cough vaccine (also called Tdap) during **each** pregnancy to help protect yourself and your baby.

- [Flu](#): You can get the flu shot before or during *each pregnancy*.
- [Whooping Cough](#): You can get the whooping cough vaccine in the last three months of *each pregnancy*.

4. Before you get pregnant, try to reach a healthy weight.



Obesity increases the risk for several serious birth defects and other pregnancy complications. If you are underweight, overweight, or have obesity, talk with your healthcare provider about ways to reach and [maintain a healthy weight](#) before you get pregnant. Focus on a lifestyle that includes

healthy eating and regular physical activity.

5. Boost your health by avoiding substances that are harmful during pregnancy.



Alcohol: There is no known safe amount of alcohol during pregnancy or when trying to get pregnant. Alcohol can cause problems for a developing baby throughout pregnancy, so it's important to stop drinking alcohol when you start trying to get pregnant.

Tobacco: Smoking causes cancer, heart disease, and other major health problems. Smoking during pregnancy can also harm the developing baby and can cause certain birth defects. Quitting smoking will help you feel better and provide a healthier environment for your baby.

Other Drugs: Using certain drugs during pregnancy can cause health problems for a woman and her developing baby. If you are pregnant or trying to get pregnant and can't stop using drugs—get help! A healthcare provider can help you with counseling, treatment, and other support services.

CERVICAL CANCER IS PREVENTABLE

January is Cervical Health Awareness month to raise awareness about HPV vaccination and prevent cervical cancer. Currently, 13,000 women in America have cervical cancer. Millions more have the HPV virus, which is the most common cause of cervical cancer. The critical thing to note this month is that deaths due to cervical cancer are preventable.



WHAT IS HPV?

Human Papillomavirus Infection, commonly referred to as HPV, is a very common virus. **Nearly 80 million people in the United States are infected.** This virus can be spread through sexual activity. Since many who are infected never exhibit any symptoms, it can be easily spread without realizing. This is why regular exams are so important.

Mild cases of HPV can produce genital warts, while extreme cases can lead to Cervical Cancer. There is no treatment available for HPV, which is why the vaccine is so important. Prevention is possible.

THE HPV VACCINE

Doctors recommend that both boys and girls receive the HPV vaccine beginning at age 11 or 12. Receiving the vaccine at such an early age ensures a better and stronger immune response. Usually, only 2 doses are necessary for children under age 15. In adulthood, it may take up to 3 doses of the vaccine to achieve the same result. Individuals can receive the vaccine through age 45.



Beginning at age 21, women should receive a pap screening every year. Women over 30 should receive both a pap test and HPV test regularly. Most insurance plans cover cervical cancer screenings, so all preventative care should come at no additional cost to the patient. This makes it even easier to prevent Cervical Cancer.



EARLY DETECTION IS KEY

Regular cervical screenings can detect any abnormal changes in cells *before* they become cancerous. So even though there is no treatment, prevention is very simple. It's simple because all it takes is to keep up with your regular well check-ups.

Help us spread the word and promote awareness about Cervical Cancer prevention. The tragedy of deaths by Cervical Cancer can be prevented with regular screenings and follow up care. Visit our

GLAUCOMA AWARENESS MONTH

Currently, more than 3 million people in the United States have glaucoma. The National Eye Institute projects this number will reach 4.2 million by 2030, a 58 percent increase.

- Early Symptoms: None
- Later Symptoms: Loss of side (peripheral) vision, blindness
- Diagnosis: Dilated eye exam
- Treatment: Medicine (usually eye drops), laser treatment, surgery



WHAT IS GLAUCOMA?

Glaucoma is a group of eye diseases that can cause vision loss and blindness by damaging a nerve in the back of your eye called the optic nerve.

The symptoms can start so slowly that you may not notice them. The only way to find out if you have glaucoma is to get a comprehensive dilated eye exam.

There's no cure for glaucoma, but early treatment can often stop the damage and protect your vision.

January is Glaucoma Awareness Month

Make eye health a New Year's resolution.
Get a dilated eye exam.



MAKE A RESOLUTION TO LEARN MORE.

Every New Year, you make a list of things you will do to stay healthy so you can feel your best. But, did you realize that feeling your best includes seeing your best too? January is Glaucoma Awareness Month – the perfect time to spread the word about the disease. So, this year, add learning about glaucoma to your list! Your eyes will thank you for it.

1. Glaucoma can cause vision loss and blindness, which can't be reversed. Glaucoma causes fluid to build up in your eye, causing pressure that can damage the optic nerve, which transfers visual

images to your brain. But, you can save your vision with early detection and treatment.

2. There are no early symptoms. Glaucoma often has no early warning signs. No pain. No discomfort. No blurry vision. Only advanced glaucoma will affect your vision. Don't wait for symptoms to visit your eye doctor!

3. In the United States, half the people who have glaucoma don't know they do. Nearly 3 million Americans have glaucoma. Half don't know it. Lack

of awareness and the absence of symptoms are preventing people from detecting the disease early. You can change that! Find out if you have glaucoma.

4. Some people are at higher risk than others. African Americans over 40, adults over 60 – especially Hispanics/Latinos, and people with a family history of glaucoma are at higher risk, making early detection especially important. Are you at higher risk? Talk to your family about glaucoma.

5. There is only one way to know if you have glaucoma. Getting a comprehensive dilated eye

exam is the only way to find out if you have glaucoma. During the exam, an eye care professional places drops in your eyes to widen the pupils and looks for signs of the disease in the optic nerve.

Now that you've got the facts about glaucoma, make a resolution for healthier vision. Schedule a comprehensive dilated eye exam today! And encourage your friends and loved ones to do the same.

To learn more about glaucoma, visit www.nei.nih.gov/glaucoma.

HEALTHY WEIGHT

HEALTHY EATING FOR A HEALTHY WEIGHT



A healthy lifestyle involves many choices. Among them, choosing a balanced diet or healthy eating plan. So how do you choose a healthy eating plan? Let's begin by defining what a healthy eating plan is.

According to the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015–2020*, a healthy eating plan:

- Emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products
- Includes lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts
- Is low in saturated fats, *trans* fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars
- Stays within your daily calorie needs

Eat Healthfully and Enjoy It!

A healthy eating plan that helps you manage your weight includes a variety of foods you may not have considered. If “healthy eating” makes you think about the foods you **can't** have, try refocusing on all the new foods you **can** eat

- **Fresh, Frozen, or Canned Fruits** — don't think just apples or bananas. All fresh, frozen, or canned fruits are great choices. Be sure to try some “exotic” fruits, too. How about a mango? Or a juicy pineapple or kiwi fruit! When your favorite fresh fruits aren't in season, try a frozen, canned, or dried variety of a fresh fruit you enjoy. One caution about canned fruits is that they may contain added sugars or syrups. Be sure and choose canned varieties of fruit packed in water or in their own juice.



- **Fresh, Frozen, or Canned Vegetables** — try something new. You may find that you love grilled vegetables or steamed vegetables with an herb you haven't tried like rosemary. You can sauté (panfry) vegetables in a non-stick pan with a small amount of cooking spray. Or try frozen or canned vegetables for a quick side dish—just microwave and serve. When trying canned vegetables, look for vegetables without added salt, butter, or cream sauces. Commit to going to the produce department and trying a new vegetable each week.

- **Calcium-rich foods** — you may automatically think of a glass of low-fat or fat-free milk when someone says “eat more dairy products.” But what about low-fat and fat-free yogurts without added sugars? These come in a wide variety of flavors and can be a great dessert substitute for those with a sweet tooth.
- **A new twist on an old favorite** — if your favorite recipe calls for frying fish or breaded chicken, try healthier variations using baking or grilling. Maybe even try a recipe that uses dry beans in place of higher-fat meats. Ask around or search the internet and magazines for recipes with fewer calories — you might be surprised to find you have a new favorite dish!

DO I HAVE TO GIVE UP MY FAVORITE COMFORT FOOD?

No! Healthy eating is all about balance. You can enjoy your favorite foods even if they are high in calories, fat or added sugars. The key is eating them only once in a while, and balancing them out with healthier foods and more physical activity.

SOME GENERAL TIPS FOR COMFORT FOODS:

- Eat them less often. If you normally eat these foods every day, cut back to once a week or once a month. You’ll be cutting your calories because you’re not having the food as often.
- Eat smaller amounts. If your favorite higher-calorie food is a chocolate bar, have a smaller size or only half a bar.
- Try a lower-calorie version. Use lower-calorie ingredients or prepare food differently. For example, if your macaroni and cheese recipe uses whole milk, butter, and full-fat cheese, try remaking it with non-fat milk, less butter, light cream cheese, fresh spinach and tomatoes. Just remember to not increase your portion size. For more ideas on how to cut back on calories, see [Eat More Weigh Less](#).
- The point is, you can figure out how to include almost any food in your healthy eating plan in a way that still helps you lose weight or maintain a healthy weight.

THYROID HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH



The thyroid gland is a small, butterfly-shaped gland located in the base of the neck just below the Adam’s apple. Although relatively small, the thyroid gland plays a huge role in our body, influencing the function of many of the body’s most essential organs, including the heart, brain, liver, kidneys and skin. The thyroid’s job is to make thyroid hormones, which are secreted into the blood and then carried to every tissue in the body. Thyroid hormone helps the body use energy, stay warm and keep the brain, heart, muscles, and other organs working as they should. It is vitally important to ensure your thyroid gland is healthy and functioning properly.

6 SIGNS THAT YOU NEED TO HAVE YOUR THYROID CHECKED



Over 12% of Americans have a thyroid condition, and many aren't even aware of it. Could you be one of them?

“The thyroid, a butterfly-shaped gland located at the base of the neck, produces an important hormone called thyroid hormone (TH). TH plays a major role in how our bodies function, and an imbalance in this hormone can impact your energy level, weight, metabolism, heart rate, bowels, mood, cholesterol levels, bones, women's menstrual cycles, and more,” explains [Ben Cooperberg, MD](#),

physician at Penn Endocrinology Washington Square.

POSSIBLE SIGNS OR SYMPTOMS OF A THYROID CONDITION

If you've experienced any of the following signs or symptoms it might be time to get your thyroid checked.

YOUR WEIGHT HAS CHANGED SIGNIFICANTLY, EVEN THOUGH YOUR HABITS REMAIN THE SAME

Significant and unexplained changes in your weight could be the result of either hyperthyroidism (an overactive thyroid) or hypothyroidism (an underactive thyroid). In hyperthyroidism your thyroid gland produces too much of the hormone thyroxine which causes your body's metabolism to hasten, leading to weight loss. In contrast, in hypothyroidism, your body is unable to produce enough thyroxine which causes the metabolism to slow down, thus aiding in your weight gain.

YOU'VE NOTICED A CHANGE IN YOUR APPEARANCE

In addition to fluctuations in your weight, look for changes in your appearance including weaker or more brittle hair, dry, red, itchy, thinning or irritated skin, swelling in your joints, a puffy face, or swelling at the base of your neck. It may be easy to dismiss these issues as normal skin problems, but if you've noticed changes in your skin's appearance along with one or more of the other factors mentioned here, it may be time to have your thyroid checked.

YOU'RE MISERABLE

Your physical appearance isn't the only thing affected by your hormones; they also play a big role in your overall mood and mental wellness. Hyperthyroidism may cause you to feel anxious, nervous, and irritable whereas hypothyroidism can cause depression.

YOU'RE ALWAYS TIRED

Hyperthyroidism can make it difficult for you to fall asleep at night, thus leading to fatigue, whereas hypothyroidism's lack of thyroxine can deplete your body from all of its energy. Additionally, with both of these conditions you'll likely experience muscle weakness which causes your body to feel tired and worn down.

YOU'RE ALWAYS HOT OR ALWAYS COLD, BUT NEVER COMFORTABLE

Hyperthyroidism may cause sensitivity to heat and excessive sweating, where a person suffering from hypothyroidism may struggle to keep warm at all. When the body's thyroid is working properly its cells will produce 65% energy and 35% heat. However, those with a thyroid condition will either be producing too much or not enough thyroxine. This change in hormone levels will confuse the body into producing either too much heat and not enough energy or vice versa.

Weight can also affect an individual's sensitivity to heat and cold as the more body weight you carry, the likelier you are to remain hot. Individuals with an underactive thyroid are more likely to suffer from being overweight or obese, which makes them more prone to feeling hot. In contrast, individuals with an overactive thyroid will struggle to maintain or gain weight which may cause a decline in body weight and fat, making the body more sensitive to the cold.

YOU'VE SKIPPED YOUR PERIOD, BUT ARE NOT PREGNANT

For women, thyroid issues may affect their menstrual cycle and fertility. This is especially true with hypothyroidism, as too little thyroxine can make it difficult for your body to release eggs which are needed for ovulation, impairing a woman's overall fertility. Women with hypothyroidism may also be at a higher risk for problems during pregnancy including preeclampsia and miscarriage. Women who produce too much thyroxine may also experience the loss of their period and postpartum thyroiditis.

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY SIGNS OR SYMPTOMS

Just because you're not showing any signs or symptoms of a thyroid disorder, doesn't mean it's not there. Thyroid nodules, which Dr. Cooperberg defined as being "very common masses within the thyroid gland" are not always as easy to identify as hyperthyroidism and hypothyroidism. Alejandra Borensztein, MD, a physician at Penn Endocrinology Cherry Hill, further explained, "Sometimes, patients notice or feel a bump on their neck, or sometimes their doctor detects a lump during a physical exam." The lack of other symptoms can make it more challenging to detect. Dr. Borensztein continued, "Thyroid nodules are often found incidentally during neck imaging for other conditions and are picked up in CT scans or MRIs."

Catching a thyroid nodule early on can help decrease your chances of developing an overactive thyroid. Additionally, it can also help you to detect and treat more serious conditions early on including thyroid cancer.

If you think you might be experiencing symptoms related to thyroid disorders or notice a change in appearance to your thyroid, consult with your primary care provider.

resources this issue

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