January

CERVICAL CANCER AWARENESS

Why is this important?

More than 11,500 women in the United States are diagnosed with invasive cervical cancer each year, and 4,000 die as a result. The disease is preventable with vaccination and appropriate screening. Cervical cancer is most often found in women living in poverty who lack access to care, but it can also result from those with access who don't complete their annual wellness visit with their gynecologist.

What individuals can do :

Women should visit their ob-gyn for a preventive care visit annually.

Remember preventive care visits and tests are 100% covered by the health plan.

The CDC recommends cervical cancer screenings start at age 30. Consult with your physician regarding the recommendations for you.

Sources: National Cervical Cancer Coalition | American Sexual Health Association | Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

February

AMERICAN HEART MONTH

Why is this important?

Nearly half of all U.S. adults have some type of cardiovascular disease, a percentage that reflects recently updated guidelines for treating high blood pressure, according to a 2019 report from the American Heart Association. High blood pressure – also known as hypertension – can lead to heart attack, heart failure and stroke and is commonly known as the 'silent killer' due to its typical lack of symptoms. It is important to know that nearly 80% of cardiac events can be prevented through lifestyle changes.

What individuals can do :

Visit your primary care provider annually and complete preventive care screenings including cholesterol and glucose biometrics as recommended.

Remember preventive care visits are covered by your health plan at 100% as long as the visit is for preventive care only and other health issues are not discussed.

Focus on the AHA's Guidelines known as "Life's Simple 7": Eat a healthy diet, exercise regularly, avoid excess weight, do not smoke and keep blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar within a healthy range.

Sources: American Heart Association

March

COLON CANCER AWARENESS

Why is this important?

The American Cancer Society estimates that there are over 100,000 new cases of colon cancer and over 45,000 new cases of rectal cancer in the United States each year. Overall, the lifetime risk of developing colorectal cancer is about 1 in 23 for men and 1 in 26 for women. However, each person's risk might be higher or lower than this, depending on their risk factors.

What individuals can do :

- Know the signs and symptoms of colon cancer, such as changes in bowel habits, rectal bleeding and persistent abdominal discomfort.
- Talk to your doctor about when to begin colorectal cancer screenings and schedule a screening if appropriate.
- Listen to your body and tell your doctor if something is not right.
- Support Dress in Blue Day on the first Friday in March and consider leading a fundraiser.
- Know your family health history.

Sources: American Cancer Society | Colorectal Cancer Alliance - Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month | Colorectal Cancer Alliance - Dress in Blue Day

April

REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

Why is this important?

When a material is used to make something, it's important that it breaks down organically, or can be reused or recycled into something else. Otherwise, that material only serves one purpose before it ends up in a landfill long-term where it will sit – forever. Recycling reduces waste, conserves important natural resources, prevents the spread of pollution and saves energy. If waste is not recycled, it can emit greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming or climate change. Recycling does more than benefit the environment; it can also stimulate the economy by creating jobs in the manufacturing and recycling industries. It also helps America rely on domestic sources of materials rather than imports.

What individuals can do :

Citizens in every community can do many activities to work together and reduce waste. Each of us can make a difference by reducing, reusing and recycling materials throughout our communities and encouraging our neighbors to do the same.

Recycle plastics, paper and cardboard.

Allow old household materials to be reused by donating them rather than sending them to a landfill.

On Earth Day, April 22, show your commitment to a clean environment by volunteering for a cleanup effort in your community.

Sources: United States Environmental Protection Agency | NASA Global Climate Change | Green Matters

May

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

Why is this important?

While 1 in 5 people will experience a mental illness during their lifetime, everyone faces challenges in life that can impact their mental health. Anxiety disorders are among the most common mental illnesses in America. Anxiety is one of many mental health conditions, and 46% of Americans will meet the criteria for a diagnosable mental health condition sometime in their life, and half of those people will develop conditions by the age of 14.

What individuals can do :

Whether you are dealing with stress, a divorce or a natural disaster, it's important to learn what's affecting your health. Taking a screening is one of the easiest ways to determine whether you are experiencing symptoms of a mental health or substance use condition.

Make time for things that you enjoy. Even if it's just 15 minutes a day, set aside time to do something you find fun or relaxing – it will release chemical messengers in your body that are good for your physical and mental health.

Find someone you trust to talk about how you are feeling. And remember that if you really need someone to just listen rather than share their experiences, it's okay to tell them that.

Take advantage of resources available through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offered by your employer.

Sources: Mental Health America | National Institute of Mental Health | National Alliance on Mental Illness

June

NATIONAL SAFETY MONTH

Why is this important?

Safety is crucial both inside and outside the workplace. National Safety Month focuses on saving lives and preventing injuries. Providing employees with First Aid, CPR and AED training can be a key part of a workplace safety initiative. 70% of deaths from heart attacks occur before reaching the hospital. Being trained in CPR can be the difference between life and death in those critical moments.

What individuals can do :

Pursue CPR / First Aid certification. Click here to find a class near you through the American Red Cross.

Learn about defensive driving and consider completing a course online or at a local school. Check out defensivedriving.org for more information.

Prepare to respond in an emergency. Build a disaster supply kit including water, non-perishable food, a flashlight, first aid kit and other materials. Click here to access a list of materials to add to your disaster supply kit.

Sources: American Heart Association | National Safety Council

July

SUN SAFETY MONTH

Why is this important?

Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the U.S. by far. According to one estimate, about 5.4 million cases of skin cancer are diagnosed among 3.3 million people each year. Many people are diagnosed with more than one spot of skin cancer at the same time. The number of skin cancers among people 50 and older has been increasing for many years. This is probably a combination of better skin cancer detection, people getting more sun exposure and people living longer.

What individuals can do :

Check your skin. Follow the instructions found on the American Cancer Society website.

Take the Sun Safety Quiz.

It's important to wear sunscreen, but no sunscreen protects you completely. Staying in the shade, wearing sun protective clothing and hats, and putting on UV blocking sunglasses can help limit your sun exposure.

Check out cancer.org for more quizzes, videos and resources on how UV exposure, how to protect yourself, how to check your skin and to learn more about skin cancer.

Sources: American Cancer Society

August

IMMUNIZATION AWARENESS

Why is this important?

Every year thousands of adults in the U.S. become seriously ill and are hospitalized because of diseases that vaccines can help prevent. Many adults even die from these diseases. By getting vaccinated, you can help protect yourself and your family from serious, sometimes deadly, diseases. Some diseases are no longer common in the United States because of vaccination. However, if we stopped vaccinating, the few cases we have in the United States could very quickly become tens or hundreds of thousands of cases.

What individuals can do :

- Get a flu shot every year. Make a plan in late summer and be sure to get your shot by the end of October.
- Click here to find out the vaccines you may need based on your risk factors.
- Visit your primary care physician annually and make sure you are up-to-date on all the vaccines you need.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

September

PROSTATE CANCER AWARENESS

Why is this important?

Aside from non-melanoma skin cancer, prostate cancer is the most common cancer among men in the United States. It is also one of the leading causes of cancer death among men of all races and Hispanic origin populations. All men are at risk for prostate cancer and the most common risk factor is age. The older a man gets, the greater his chance of getting prostate cancer. African-American men and those with a family history are also at increased risk of getting prostate cancer.

What individuals can do :

The US Preventive Services Task Force states that men age 55 to 69 benefit most from a prostate cancer screening test.

Men should talk to their doctor to consider the risks and benefits of getting screened for prostate cancer.

Learn more about the possible benefits and risks of screening, diagnosis and treatment here.

Women should encourage the men in their lives to talk to their doctors about getting screened for prostate cancer.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

October

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

Why is this important?

1 in 8 women in the United States will be diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime. Breast cancer is the most common cancer in American women, except for skin cancers. On average, every 2 minutes a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer in the United States. According to the World Health Organization, breast cancer is the most common cancer among women worldwide, claiming the lives of hundreds of thousands of women each year and affecting countries at all levels of modernization. The American Cancer Society states that when breast cancer is detected early in the localized stage, the 5-year survival rate is 99%. Early detection is key.

What individuals can do :

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) mammogram guidelines recommend women begin screening at age 50 and repeat the test every one to two years.

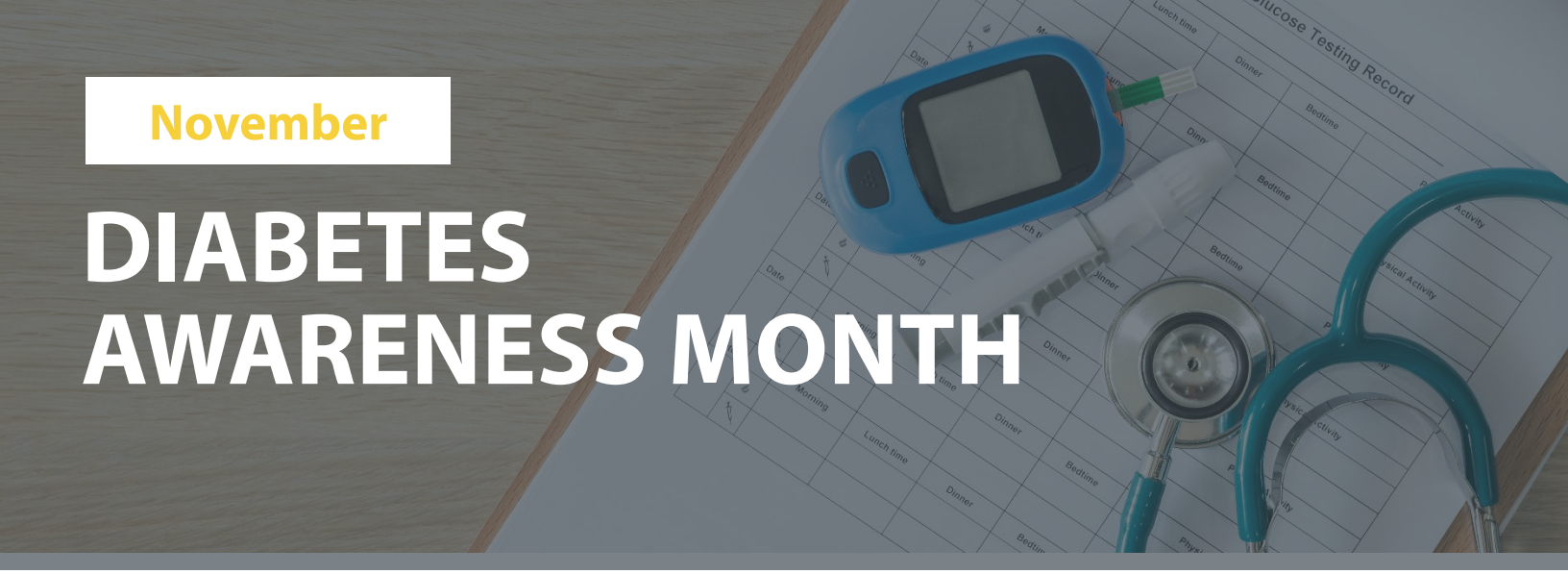
Complete a breast self-exam monthly. Click here to learn more about how to perform a breast self-exam.

Women should talk to their doctor about when to start mammogram screenings as it could be recommended to begin sooner based on your family history.

Sources: National Breast Cancer Foundation | American Cancer Society | National Cancer Institute

November

DIABETES AWARENESS MONTH



Why is this important?

More than 8 out of 10 Americans most at risk for type 2 diabetes don't know it. 1 in 10 Americans has diabetes today. Nearly 1 in 2 of all American adults have diabetes or prediabetes and every 21 seconds someone in the US is diagnosed with diabetes. Diabetes increases the risk for many serious health problems including heart disease, kidney failure, stroke, blindness and amputation.

What individuals can do :

Visit your primary care physician annually and complete recommended preventive lab tests to stay on top of your risk.

Knowing your risk is the first step to a healthier life. Take a quick 60-second test here.

If you learn you are at risk for diabetes, the most important step you can take is to speak with your doctor now. If left untreated, diabetes can lead to major complications. Early detection and treatment can decrease your risk significantly.

Sources: American Diabetes Association

November

GREAT AMERICAN SMOKEOUT

Why is this important?

About 32.4 million American adults still smoke cigarettes, and smoking remains the single largest preventable cause of death and illness in the world. Smoking causes an estimated 480,000 deaths every year, or about 1 in 5 deaths. More than 16 million Americans live with a smoking-related disease. Quitting smoking isn't easy and it's important to have a plan. The Great American Smokeout on the third Thursday in November can be the start of a journey towards a smoke-free life.

What individuals can do :

If you smoke, take advantage of the American Cancer Society's resources for the support you need to quit. Get started NOW!

If you know someone who wants to quit smoking, encourage them to seek support through the American Cancer Society or the CDC.

Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW for free support.

Sources: American Cancer Society | Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

December

CHARITABLE GIVING & VOLUNTEERING

Why is this important?

Giving your time, talents or treasures changes lives, positively impacts your community and enriches your life. Millions of people give to charity on a regular basis to support causes they believe in, as well as for the positive effect it has on their own lives. If donating is not possible or practical for you, then remember that your time is also precious to those who need a hand. And all of us have a skill that can be a gift to friends, neighbors or organizations.

What individuals can do :

- Find a charity that's working towards causes important to you. Search by cause, size, and more here.
- Use your skills to make dinner for a struggling friend, fix a leaky faucet or help with other household tasks.
- Give a one-time donation or consider a monthly payment.
- Donate used clothes, toys or furniture to a Goodwill or a Salvation Army near you.

Sources: Charities Aid Foundation | Charity Navigator | Forbes