



National Public Health Week
April 2-8, 2012 • www.nphw.org

Since 1995, communities across the country have celebrated National Public Health Week (NPHW) during the first full week of April to highlight issues that are important to improving the public's health.

The American Public Health Association (APHA) serves as the organizer of NPHW and develops a national campaign to educate the public, policymakers and practitioners about the contributions of public health and issues related to each year's theme. APHA creates comprehensive planning, organizing and outreach materials that can be used during and after the week to raise awareness.



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A healthier America begins with strong public health systems across the country. APHA continues to champion the creation of the healthiest nation in one generation with an emphasis on public health's essential role in prevention. Sometimes, the smallest change can make the biggest difference. Small actions — eating healthy, avoiding tobacco, receiving vaccinations and using seat belts — can go a long way toward preventing chronic diseases, communicable diseases and injuries before they start. Communities can shape healthier neighborhoods by supporting local farmers markets, smoking bans, substance use treatment centers and walking trails. The benefits of preventive care are broadly shared across communities, homes and families.

Preventing diseases and injuries before they start is critical to helping people live longer, healthier lives while managing health-related costs. Chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes are responsible for millions of premature deaths and cause Americans to miss 2.5 billion days of work each year, resulting in lost productivity totaling more than \$1 trillion.

We must work to move our health system from one based on sick care to one rooted in wellness, prevention and preparedness. Preventive measures can improve the health of individuals, families and communities. Doing so will help America become a healthier place and help reach our goal of becoming the healthiest nation in just one generation.

During 2012, National Public Health Week (NPHW) and the American Public Health Association (APHA) will build upon the National Prevention Strategy, created by the National Prevention Council, to improve health and wellness across the lifespan. Participate in National Public Health Week and help educate families, communities and public officials about the importance of creating environments that promote healthy lifestyles and healthy choices. Each day of the week will highlight ways to increase the number of Americans who are healthy at every stage of life through individual and community-level actions.

Health is more than merely the absence of disease. It is physical, mental and social well-being. Lifelong health starts not when a health problem arises but through prevention. Prevention promotes the ability to remain active, independent and involved in one's community as we age.

Currently, Americans are living 78 years on average, but only 69 of these years are spent in good health, making it important to invest in prevention to complement existing health systems and treatment options. Despite providing some of the world's best

health care, the United States still ranks below many countries in life expectancy, infant mortality and many other indicators of healthy life.

In communities across the country, we are seeing more people change the way they care for their health by restricting tobacco use, eating healthier, becoming more physically active and avoiding distracted driving. Collectively, we must continue to take steps to improve our health and the



health of our loved ones. The future of our nation's health depends on a properly equipped public health infrastructure in cities and towns across the country.

Join the movement to educate Americans about what we can do to live healthier lives.

For more information, visit www.nphw.org.

With nearly 1 million Americans dying every year from diseases that could be prevented, even small preventive changes and community initiatives can make a big difference in living healthier lives. Here are just a few ideas.

Active Living and Healthy Eating

- Eat less fatty and unhealthy foods by avoiding oversized portions while filling half of your plate with fruits and vegetables.
- Prevent foodborne illnesses by following key safety practices such as hand-washing, cleaning surfaces often when cooking, and ensuring that food is cooked to the proper temperature.
- Engage in at least 2 ½ hours a week of moderate or vigorous intensity exercise (if you are an adult). Make sure children engage in an hour of daily play.
- Promote healthy choices by designing communities to include sidewalks, bike lanes, grocery stores and farmers markets to encourage physical activity and healthy eating.

Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs

- Do not drive if you have been drinking alcohol or have taken any drug that could alter your ability to operate a motor vehicle.
- Avoid high-risk alcohol consumption, use of illicit drugs or the misuse of prescription medications. If needed, contact Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) National Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP to learn more about treatment.
- Encourage employers to develop substance management, tobacco-cessation and intervention programs for employees.

- Advocate for smoke-free and tobacco-free policies that improve indoor air quality, protect individuals from secondhand smoke, decrease tobacco consumption and encourage tobacco users to quit.

Communicable Diseases

- Promote proper hand-washing and food preparation habits to limit the spread of communicable diseases, which frequently occurs via airborne viruses or bacteria.
- Follow the recommended immunization schedule for children and adults.
- Support local disease control, reporting and prevention legislation to lessen the impacts of some of the most serious communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, influenza and tuberculosis.
- Advocate for paid sick days as a strategy to reduce communicable disease transmission in the workplace.



Reproductive and Sexual Health

- Practice safe sex, and use contraception effectively.
- Eat healthy, stay active, cease tobacco and alcohol use, and see a doctor regularly during pregnancy.
- Have routine preventive screenings and health services to enhance early detection of HIV, syphilis, chlamydia and other STIs.
- Provide comprehensive reproductive and sexual health education.
- Promote access to quality health care to reduce HIV/AIDS, gonorrhea and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Mental and Emotional Well-Being



- Provide positive parenting practices to reduce the likelihood of child maltreatment and the emergence of childhood behavioral problems.
- Seek out proper treatment, promote your community's resources and receive proper screening for mental health issues.
- Identify the signs of depression and suicide and refer people to appropriate resources.
- Encourage employers to provide comprehensive mental health services as part of health care plans and promote violence-free environments.

Prevention can help you lead a healthier and longer life:

- Smoking bans in workplaces, restaurants and other public places decrease heart attacks in nonsmokers by 17-19%.
- Preventing drug abuse and reducing high-risk alcohol consumption decreases crime, motor vehicle fatalities and health care costs.
- Healthier eating can reduce the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, osteoporosis and several types of cancer, while helping people maintain a healthy body weight.
- Early identification and treatment can prevent the onset of emotional disorders, decrease rates of chronic disease and help people lead healthier lives.
- Providing community support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth can lessen the impact of depression, use of illegal drugs and suicidal behavior.

There's more that can be done beyond these actions. If adequately funded, comprehensive health programs will help ensure that vulnerable populations transition smoothly into a new health system and receive continued, quality health services.



Talk to friends and family to help raise awareness in your community and among its leaders. Here are just a few ways to get involved in your community during National Public Health Week:

- Ask your Congressional delegation to protect public health funding from further cuts.
- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper about the importance of tobacco free public areas.
- Partner with local schools to further educate youth and adults about the risks of drug abuse, high-risk drinking and unhealthy sexual behaviors.
- Organize a healthier-eating seminar at a local grocery store or farmers market.
- Hold a training session for community members who work with the elderly, youth and armed services personnel to identify the signs of depression and suicide.
- Create healthy work environments that support people's ability to make healthy choices, such as cafeterias with healthy options, walking trails on school grounds, and open stairwells to encourage healthy behaviors.

These are only some of the many ways you can make a difference. Join the movement to create a healthier America, rooted in wellness and prevention.

Together we can improve our nation's health.



During NPHW, support APHA's national efforts by working in your community to:

Identify local officials who have been vocal on public health measures and invite them to issue a proclamation during NPHW. Encourage them to sign the proclamation at a town hall meeting that will address the importance of embracing prevention to improve community health.

Draw attention to NPHW by:

- Attending and promoting NPHW events. Resources and a toolkit for planning and publicizing activities can be found at www.nphw.org.
- Becoming a NPHW partner by signing up at www.nphw.org and linking to the site.
- Organizing an event and posting to the online calendar of events at www.nphw.org.
- Collaborating with local partners and APHA's Affiliates (<http://www.apha.org/membergroups/states>) to promote NPHW.
- Communicating with local media about the importance of NPHW and providing local story angles to garner coverage.
- Publicizing NPHW on your Facebook, Twitter and other social networking accounts. Link to APHA's Facebook page, Twitter account and YouTube channel.
- Engaging bloggers in a discussion about your local NPHW activities.
- Informing your members of Congress about NPHW by visiting APHA's Take Action page at <http://action.apha.org/site/PageNavigator/Advocacy>.