

Wellness Program Newsletter

Wellness Matters

All benefit-eligible municipal employees, retirees, and benefit-eligible family members in East Longmeadow, Hampden, HWRSD, Longmeadow, LPVEC and Wilbraham may participate in any of the programs and classes listed. Friends are also invited to participate, however will not be eligible for incentives.

Coordinator's Corner

Welcome Spring! How wonderful it is to have some warm and sunny days. Now's the time to enjoy a walk or hike, get on a bike, put the canoe in the water, spruce up your outdoor space and start a garden. The possibilities are just about endless!

The 2015 weight loss challenge ended the first week of March when 58 people weighed out. About half of those lost a total of 123 pounds! Congrats to all! Keep up with the healthy eating & exercise habits you adopted along the way.

Our second annual biometric screening event for SVRHT members took place in February and March. Body mass index and blood pressure were areas of higher risk among this small population, which follows the national trend. The good news—some improvement in blood pressure readings and glucose levels was seen from last year's screening results. That is a positive trend we want to continue! Learn more about how you can improve your BP numbers on page 2.

Looking for something fun, exciting and different to do this spring? The Pioneer Valley Riverfront Club (PVRFC) is holding their annual Springfield Dragon Boat Festival on June 27. You can register a team with family, friends and/or co-workers to race on the Connecticut River! Check out their website if you are interested in this active, team-building experience: <http://www.pvrivierfront.org/#!db-fest-reg/c17fa>

Best~ Lyn

Blood Pressure Screening Clinic
Town of Wilbraham

Lee Giglietti, Public Health Nurse, will be at Wilbraham Town Hall on Thursday, May 21, from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.!

Lee will conduct free B/P screenings and provide educational information.

High blood pressure sometimes has no warning signs or symptoms. Many people do not know that they have high blood pressure. It greatly increases the risk for heart disease and stroke, the first and third leading causes of death in the United States.

Stop by to know your numbers!

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www.scantichealth.org

Power Down in May for National High Blood Pressure Education Month

Less is better in some things, including in blood pressure. About 1 of 3 US adults—67 million people—have high blood pressure.¹ High blood pressure makes your heart work too hard and increases your risk of heart disease and stroke. You can have high blood pressure and not know it. That is why it is called the silent killer. It is also why it is so important to have your blood pressure checked. If you know family or friends who haven't had their blood pressure checked recently, make it a point to ask them to do it in May, National High Blood Pressure Education Month.

It is easy to check blood pressure and it is painless. It can be checked by your doctor, and many pharmacies have free screenings.

Caution! Arteries Under Pressure

Blood pressure is the force of blood on the walls of your blood vessels as blood flows through them. This pressure naturally rises and falls during the day, but when it is consistently too high, it is considered high blood pressure. The medical term is hypertension.

Like the pipes in your house, your arteries can fail if they are under too much pressure. The video, "High Blood Pressure Basics," illustrates the concept of high blood pressure.

More than 360,000 American deaths in 2010 included high blood pressure as a primary or contributing cause.² That's 1,000 deaths each day.

Blood pressure has two numbers, systolic and diastolic, and is measured in millimeters of mercury (mmHg). Systolic pressure (the top number) is the force on the blood vessel walls when the heart beats and pumps blood out of the heart. Diastolic pressure (the bottom number) is the force that occurs when the heart relaxes in between beats.

If your blood pressure is less than 120 systolic and less than 80 diastolic, then your blood pressure is normal; between 120 and 139 systolic and 80–89 diastolic, you have prehypertension. Systolic of 140 or greater, or diastolic that is 90 or greater, is hypertension.

Keep It Down in There!

If you have high blood pressure, there are steps you can take to get it under control, including—

Ask your doctor what your blood pressure should be. Set a goal to lower your pressure with your doctor and then discuss how you can reach your goal. Work with your health care team to make sure you meet that goal.

Take your blood pressure medication as directed. If you are having trouble, ask your doctor what you can do to make it easier. For example, you may want to discuss your medication schedule with your doctor if you are taking multiple drugs at different times of the day. Or you may want to discuss side effects you are feeling, or the cost of your medicine.

Quit smoking—and if you don't smoke, don't start. You can find tips and resources at CDC's Smoking and Tobacco Web site or Be Tobacco Free Web site.

Reduce sodium. Most Americans consume too much sodium, and it raises blood pressure in most people. Learn about tips to reduce your sodium.

There are other healthy habits, that can help keep your blood pressure under control—

- *Achieve and maintain a healthy body weight.
- *Participate in 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week.
- *Eat a healthy diet that is high in fruits and vegetables and low in sodium, saturated fats, trans fat, and cholesterol.
- *Manage stress.
- *Limit the amount of alcohol you drink (no more than one drink each day for women and two for men).
- *If you have high blood pressure and are prescribed medication, take it as directed.
- *If you have a family member who has high blood pressure, you can help by taking many of the steps listed above with them.
- *Go for walks together or cook meals with lower sodium. Make it a family affair!
- *Check your blood pressure regularly.

1. CDC. Vital signs: awareness and treatment of uncontrolled hypertension among adults—United States, 2003–2010. *MMWR*. 2012; 61:703-9.

2. Go AS, Mozaffarian D, Roger VL, et al. Heart disease and stroke statistics-2014 update: a report from the American Heart Association. *Circulation*. 2014;129:e28-e292.

3. CDC. *Health, United States, 2012: With Special Feature on Emergency Care*. Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services; 2013.

4. CDC. *A Closer Look at African American Men and High Blood Pressure Control: A Review of Psychosocial Factors and Systems-Level Interventions*. Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services; 2010.

How Much Activity Do You Get?

Physical activity is anything that gets your body moving. According to the *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*, you need to do two types of physical activity each week to improve your health— aerobic and muscle-strengthening.

For Important Health Benefits Adults need at least: 2 hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (i.e., brisk walking) every week AND muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms) OR 1 hour and 15 minutes (75 minutes) of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity (i.e., jogging or running) every week AND muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms) OR An equivalent mix of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity AND muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms).

Aerobic activity – what counts? Aerobic activity or "cardio" gets you breathing harder and your heart beating faster. From pushing a lawn mower, to taking a dance class, to biking to the store – all types of activities count. As long as you're doing them at a moderate or vigorous intensity for **at least 10 minutes at a time**. **Intensity** is how hard your body is working during aerobic activity.

How do you know if you're doing light, moderate, or vigorous intensity aerobic activities? For most people, light daily activities such as shopping, cooking, or doing the laundry doesn't count toward the guidelines. Why? Your body isn't working hard enough to get your heart rate up.

Moderate-intensity aerobic activity means you're working hard enough to raise your heart rate and break a sweat. One way to tell is that you'll be able to talk, but not sing the words to your favorite song. Here are some examples of activities that require moderate effort:

Walking fast Doing water aerobics Riding a bike on level ground or with few hills
Playing doubles tennis Pushing a lawn mower

Vigorous-intensity aerobic activity means you're breathing hard and fast, and your heart rate has gone up quite a bit. If you're working at this level, you won't be able to say more than a few words without pausing for a breath. Here are some examples of activities that require vigorous effort:

Jogging or running Swimming laps Riding a bike fast or on hills
Playing singles tennis Playing basketball

You can do moderate- or vigorous-intensity aerobic activity, or a mix of the two each week. A rule of thumb is that **1 minute of vigorous-intensity activity is about the same as 2 minutes of moderate-intensity activity**. Some people like to do vigorous types of activity because it gives them about the same health benefits in half the time. If you haven't been very active lately, increase your activity level slowly. You need to feel comfortable doing moderate-intensity activities before you move on to more vigorous ones. The guidelines are about doing physical activity that is right for you.

Muscle-strengthening activities – what counts? Besides aerobic activity, you need to do things to strengthen your muscles at least 2 days a week. These activities should work all the major muscle groups of your body (legs, hips, back, chest, abdomen, shoulders, and arms). To gain health benefits, muscle-strengthening activities need to be done to the point where it's hard for you to do another repetition without help. A **repetition** is one complete movement of an activity, like lifting a weight or doing a sit-up. Try to do 8–12 repetitions per activity that count as **1 set**. Try to do at least 1 set of muscle-strengthening activities, but to gain even more benefits, do 2 or 3 sets. You can do activities that strengthen your muscles on the same or different days that you do aerobic activity, whatever works best. Just keep in mind that muscle-strengthening activities don't count toward your aerobic activity total.

There are many ways you can strengthen your muscles, whether it's at home or the gym. You may want to try the following: Lifting weights, working with resistance bands, doing exercises that use your body weight for resistance (i.e., push ups, sit ups), heavy gardening (i.e., digging, shoveling), yoga.

We know 150 minutes each week sounds like a lot of time, but it's not. That's 2 hours and 30 minutes, about the same amount of time you might spend watching a movie. The good news is that you can spread your activity out during the week, so you don't have to do it all at once. You can even break it up into smaller chunks of time during the day. It's about what works best for you, as long as you're doing physical activity at a moderate or vigorous effort for at least 10 minutes at a time.

Year-Round Sun Protection

The summer is not the only time you are at risk for damage from the sun. Find out how to protect yourself no matter what the season.

You are probably in the habit of packing sunscreen for a day at the beach or pool. But the sun is up there 365 days a year, and you need protection much of that time to reduce your lifetime sun-exposure total. Everyday exposure counts; you do not have to be actively sunbathing to get a damaging dose of the sun. Practice these sun-protection basics all year round to give your skin the best chance of long-term health:

Use a sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher when you spend time outdoors.

- *This applies to all outdoor activities: athletics, shopping, picnicking, walking or jogging, gardening, even waiting for a bus.
- *Use a broad spectrum (UVA/UVB) sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher every day. For extended outdoor activity, use a water-resistant broad spectrum (UVA/UVB) sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher.
- *Apply liberally and evenly to all exposed skin. The average adult in a bathing suit should use approximately one ounce of sunscreen per application. Not using enough will effectively reduce the product's SPF and the protection you get.
- *Be sure to cover often-missed spots: lips, ears, around eyes, neck, scalp if hair is thinning, hands, and feet.
- *Reapply at least every 2 hours, more often if some of the product may have been removed while swimming, sweating, or towel-drying.
- *Choose a product that suits your skin and your activity. [Sunscreens](#) are available in lotion, gel, spray, cream, and stick forms. Some are labeled as water resistant, sweatproof, or especially for sports; as fragrance-free, hypoallergenic, or especially for sensitive skin or children.

Cover up

- *Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants. Tightly woven fabrics and dark colors, such as deep blue and black, or bright colors, such as orange and red, offer more protection. If you can see light through a fabric, UV rays can get through too.
- *Water makes fabrics more translucent, so do not rely on a wet T-shirt.
- *A broad-brimmed hat goes a long way toward preventing skin cancer in often-exposed areas like the neck, ears, scalp, and face. Opt for a 3-4 inch brim that extends all around the hat. Baseball caps and visors shade the face but leave neck, lower face, and ears exposed.
- *UV-blocking sunglasses with wraparound or large frames protect your eyelids and the sensitive skin around your eyes, common sites for skin cancer and sun-induced aging. Sunglasses also help reduce the risk of cataracts later in life.

Seek the shade

Be aware, however, that sunlight bouncing off reflective surfaces can reach you even beneath an umbrella or a tree.

Never seek a tan.

There is no such thing as a healthy tan. A tan is the skin's response to the sun's damaging rays.

Stay away from tanning parlors and artificial tanning devices.

The UV radiation emitted by indoor tanning lamps is many times more intense than natural sunlight. Dangers include burns, premature aging of the skin, and the increased risk of skin cancer.

Protect your children and teach them sun safety at an early age.

Healthy habits are best learned young. Because skin damage occurs with each unprotected exposure and accumulates over the course of a lifetime, sun safety for children should be a priority.

Taken from <http://www.skincancer.org/prevention/sun-protection/prevention-guidelines/year-round-sun-protection>, retrieved 4/21/15.

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