

Public Health Notes

Volume 6 Issue 1

January-February 2011

NH DHHS Mission Statement: To join communities and families in providing opportunities for citizens to achieve health and independence.

Start the New Year with a Healthy New Habit

Let the New Year be your reason to start eating more folic acid and to take a multivitamin with 400 micrograms of folic acid. Folic acid is a B vitamin that helps prevent birth defects of the brain and spine (neural tube defects). It's never too late to get healthy.

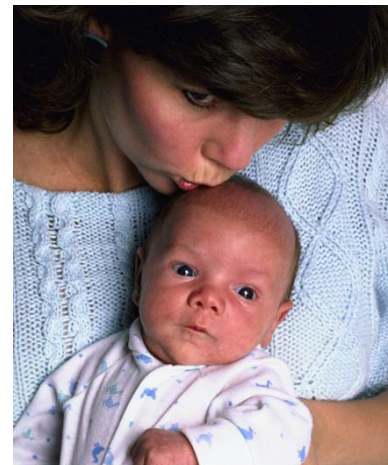
Celebrate National Folic Acid Awareness week during January 2-8, 2011 and tell someone you love to start taking folic acid today. Educate all women of childbearing age, especially Latina women, that folic acid can help prevent neural tube defects. Hispanic babies are 1.5 to 2 times more likely than others in the U.S. to be born with a neural tube defect. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that Latinas in the U.S. consume the least amount of folic acid and have the least knowledge about folic acid among racial or ethnic groups.

Many women also get folic acid through the foods they eat. Folic acid (also called folate) in its natural form can be found in enriched grains and pasta, dry cereals, beans, legumes, green leafy vegetables, and oranges.

Try these five tips for a healthy diet:

- Have a glass of orange juice with breakfast.
- Buy whole grain breads and cereals, or those enriched with folic acid.
- Enjoy a dark green leafy vegetable at lunch or dinner.
- Add beans or legumes to your soup and salad.
- Try crackers and peanut butter for a mid-day snack.

For more information on National Folic Acid Awareness week visit www.folicacidinfo.org or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/folicacid/.



Buckle Up for Safety!

In New Hampshire children 5 years of age and younger who are under 55 inches tall must be buckled in a child restraint. Children ages 6 through 17 must use a seatbelt while riding in a car. Seatbelts reduce the risk of being killed or seriously injured in a crash by about 50%. For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/Features/VitalSigns/SeatbeltSafety/.

Important Dates

January is Birth Defects Prevention Month
January is Cervical Health Awareness Month
January is Thyroid Awareness Month
January 2-8 National Folic Acid Awareness Week
January 16-22 is Healthy Weight Week
February is Children's Dental Health Month
February is American Heart Month
February 7-14 is Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Week
February 4 is National Wear Red Day



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Disposing of Medical Sharps

People all across New Hampshire depend on the use of what are called medical sharps at home, some every day to manage a medical condition. These include hypodermic needles, syringes, and lancets and can be used for administering medication, checking blood, or other purposes. It is critically important that everyone understands the proper and safe way to dispose of them to ensure protection from potential needle stick injuries or exposure to bloodborne pathogens.

There can be serious health effects associated with careless disposal of medical waste. Though rare, diseases as serious as hepatitis B and AIDS can result from accidental needle sticks. Loose needles or syringes thrown out in household trash can pose a health hazard to anyone who may come into contact with this medical waste, such as family members, small children, sanitation workers, even pets.

In New Hampshire there are several options for the safe disposal of medical sharps. First, ask your healthcare provider if there is a program affiliated with your clinic or hospital and then follow their instructions for sharps storage and disposal. Second, the Department of Environmental Services (DES), the State agency responsible for regulating the disposal of medical sharps in solid waste also has some safe disposal tips (<http://des.nh.gov/organization/commissioner/pip/factsheets/sw/documents/sw-31.pdf>). Third, some communities offer programs for collection of hazardous waste, which can include medical sharps. Check with your town office to find a collection in your area.

If you are disposing of sharps with the trash from your house, DES offers this guidance:

- Use a household container such as a plastic bleach or laundry detergent container or containers designed specifically for the disposal of sharps
- Put the sharps into the container, only filling half full, and seal the cap on with heavy-duty tape.
- Put a label on the container that says "Do Not Recycle: Household Sharps."
- Place the container in a securely fastened plastic bag and dispose of it in the trash.

There is a legislatively mandated Medical Sharps Commission in New Hampshire that has been studying potential options for the collection and safe disposal of home-generated medical sharps. The group is currently developing solutions and recommendations that will be included in its report, due out this year.



02.04.2011 - Wear Red Day for Women's Health

Wear Red Day is an annual event sponsored by the American Heart Association that encourages people to wear red in support of women's heart health. Heart disease is still the number one killer of women in the United States. The goal is to dispel rumors and raise awareness about the risks. Historically men have been the subjects of research done to understand the risks for heart disease and stroke, which led to a reduced awareness among women of the dangers. Know your risks, get tested, and get healthy! To learn more, visit www.goredforwomen.org, www.cdc.gov, or www.dhhs.nh.gov.

Maintaining a Healthy Weight Is Important for Overall Health

January 16-22, 2011 is Healthy Weight Week. Maintaining a healthy weight is key to good health. It lowers your risk for heart disease, stroke, diabetes, high blood pressure, and cancers of the breast, colon, kidney, pancreas, and esophagus.

Even a modest weight loss of 5 to 10 percent of your total body weight can improve your blood pressure, blood cholesterol, and blood sugars.

Losing weight in a healthy manner is important. It is proven that people who lose weight slowly and steadily (1 to 2 pounds per week) have more success keeping the extra pounds off. Fad diets promise fast results, but they can be unhealthy, and in the long term, most of them fail. Skip the fad diets and aim for small lasting changes.

Healthy weight loss includes healthy eating and regular activity.

To find your ideal weight, consult a body mass index (BMI) calculator such as the one at www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/index.html. Just enter your height and weight, and then click “calculate.”



If you are ready to lose a few pounds, you can increase your chance for success by making a plan that includes:

- Goals
- Rewards
- Setback plans
- Supportive people

Set Realistic Goals

Setting realistic goals is an important first step in weight management. Often, people focus on one long-term goal, weight loss, but it turns out that it is best to focus on smaller eating and activity changes. Both lead to long-term weight loss and weight management.

People who successfully lose their weight select two or three goals at a time, and they set goals that are specific, attainable, and forgiving (less than perfect). For example: “Be more active” is not specific. “Walk five miles every day” is specific but if you are just starting, it may be too ambitious. “Walk 30 minutes every day” is more attainable, but what will you do if you work late or there’s a thunderstorm during your walk time? “Walk 30 minutes five days each week” is specific, attainable, and forgiving. That’s a goal you can live with!

Reward Yourself

Reward yourself early and often! A small reward each time you meet a small goal is more effective than one big reward for a long, difficult effort. Decide how you will reward yourself – without using food as a reward. Your rewards can be tangible such as a movie, a music CD, flowers, or a plant. Or, your rewards can be intangible such as an afternoon off from work or a quiet hour alone. You know best what will work for you.

Plan on Setbacks and Build Support

Life comes with setbacks. The important thing is to pre-plan how you will deal with them. To learn more about planning on setbacks and building support, download the Weight Loss Plans fact sheet at www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/nhp/adults/documents/weightloss.pdf.

More information about improving your eating habits and physical activity for a health weight is available at www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/losing_weight/eating_habits.html and http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/physical_activity/index.html.