

## Top Threats to Your Health and What You Can Do

### 1. Drugs

- Poisonings, including alcohol and drug overdoses, is the leading cause of death for women 25-44. Whether it is alcohol or prescription meds, it is much easier to not start than to try to stop. If you are hooked, ask about ways to get your life back.

### 2. Depression - If life is getting you down, let us know.

- Major causes of depression include being in an abusive relationship, being a victim of physical or sexual abuse in the past, or having had an abortion or other traumatic experience. Suicide is the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death in women this age.

### 3. Cancer

- If it runs in the family, you may need tests earlier or more often than recommended for those at average risk

- **Breast cancer-** For age 40 and over, discuss whether to start getting mammograms depending on your risk for breast cancer. Breast self exams are no longer recommended—but at this age, many breast cancers are detected by the woman, so have any abnormalities that you notice checked out.

- **Cervical cancer-** Pap tests are only needed every 5 years if both the Pap test and HPV test (done on the pap sample) are normal. Minimize the number of sexual partners to avoid exposure to the HPV virus which causes cervical cancer

-**Lung cancer-** Avoid cigarette smoke; test home for radon

- **Colon cancer-** Start screening tests at 50 unless you note changes in bowel habits or blood in your stool

- **Skin cancer-** Avoid tanning beds. Wear a hat and sunscreen whenever in the sun. Have any moles checked that change in size, shape or color

- Eat a **healthy diet**, low in saturated fat and high in fruits and vegetables. No vitamin or supplement has been shown to decrease the risk of cancer. Birth control pills may provide some protection against ovarian cancer.

### 4. Heart Disease and Stroke

- **Don't smoke.**

- **Blood pressure** – check yearly and treat if high (> 140/90)

- **Cholesterol** – check every 5 years, more often if high

- **Diabetes-** check every 3 years if at risk or if runs in family

- Daily aspirin is not recommended for women of this age

- Estrogen containing contraceptives or hormone replacement can increase the chance of blood clots and stroke- especially if you smoke or are obese.

- **Know the symptoms** and don't wait to call for help

A heart attack can cause different symptoms in women than chest pain- more often a pressure, tightness or ache. Sudden onset of shortness of breath or nausea, vomiting and heartburn are more common in women than in men.

A stroke or brain attack can start as sudden weakness on one side of the body, difficulty speaking, understanding, or walking

If you think you or a loved one may be having a heart attack or stroke, call 911; the longer symptoms occur, the more damage can be done

### 5. Chronic Lung Disease

- **Quit smoking.** Smoking causes earlier and more severe emphysema in women compared to men. It is never too late to stop ongoing lung damage. Ask about options to help you quit.

### 6. Osteoporosis

- Get 1000mg/day of calcium and 600 units of Vitamin D each day through diet or supplements (take with food)

- Stay active doing weight bearing exercise (walk, run, etc)

### 7. Sexual health

- A multi-vitamin with folate can help prevent birth defects.

- Discuss birth control options if you are sexually active and not intending to get pregnant

### 8. Depression - If life is getting you down, let us know.

### **Recommendations for Healthy Living**

1. Don't smoke. Ask if you need help quitting
2. Maintain a healthy weight.
3. Eat healthy foods. Eat lots of fruits, vegetables and fiber. Eat less animal fat and processed foods. Avoid sweetened beverages.
4. Exercise. Get on your feet! Work up to walking or moderate exercise 30 minutes at least 5 days a week.
5. Listen to your body-- when things aren't right, get it checked out
6. Get enough sleep and avoid over the counter sleep aides
7. Get help if you are in an abusive relationship
8. Limit alcohol to 1 drink a day. Ask for help if alcohol has become a problem for you.
9. Let us know if you feel depressed on most days for more than 2 weeks or if you feel like life isn't worth living.

### **Prevent problems now**

#### **Immunizations**

- tetanus-pertussis – every 10 years
- flu shot- yearly
- pneumonia vaccine- if you have a chronic illness

#### **Blood tests**

- cholesterol- at least every 5 years
- blood sugar- if overweight or diabetes in family

#### **Cancer screening**

- Pap + HPV test- every 5 years
- Consider mammograms starting at age 40

# ***Our Goal... Your Good Health***

**Recommendations for Healthy Living  
from Your Family Physician**

**Women 30 to 49**

**Forum Family Medicine  
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