metropolitan familyhealth network

Healthwise

January/February
2023

www.MetropolitanFHN.com

A Message from the President and CEO

Dear Friends,

We hope you enjoyed a wonderful holiday season!

It is time to put all the challenges of the past few years aside and focus on getting and keeping yourself – and everyone in your family – healthy. That means:

- *Seeing your provider for a thorough physical check-up at least once a year*
- *Making and keeping twice-a-year dental check-up appointments*
- *Being certain your immunizations are ALL up-to-date (your provider will know which ones you may need)*
- *Incorporating lots of fruits and vegetables into your daily meals*
- *Getting out in the fresh air and sun as often as possible*
- *Exercising!*
- *Paying attention to emotional health*

Good health is a great gift, and we are here with a comprehensive roster of health care services to help you and your family achieve and enjoy that gift. We know you cannot put a price on good health, and we never turn anyone away because of an inability to pay.

Best wishes for a healthy and happy 2023!

Joan Dublin

Joan Dublin, RN, MPA, ACHE
President & Chief Executive Officer

Own Your Health Goals for the New Year

Every January, consumers are hit with advertisements based on "New Year, New You!" marketing. It can be easy to get wrapped up in quick fixes for one's physical shortcomings and ailments.

Too often people put their hopes into products and services that promise rapid results for weight loss and other health and wellness goals. Don't believe hype. Change takes time. Empty promises produce results that are not sustainable. Fad diets may help you lose weight quickly but pack on more pounds later. Breaking a bad habit like a tobacco addiction or unhealthy eating requires daily work.

Follow these tips to improve your health and well-being in 2023:

Focus on one goal

Keep it simple. Trying to transform the body from head to toe will likely lead to disappointment. Too much too soon is a setup for failure. Choosing one attainable goal is manageable and do-able.

Track your progress.

Health and wellness is a journey, not a destination. Keep a journal to track daily activities, including food choices, exercise, and thoughts and feelings. Writing everything down helps to get and stay motivated and see patterns that lead to good or bad days. Download a fitness app to count daily steps, calories burned, and more. If energy levels increase and sleep improves, you are heading in the right direction.

Find new ways to measure results.

If the goal is weight loss, stepping on the scale every morning usually leads to disappointment. Instead wrap a tape measure around your waist once a week. Try on clothes that were once tight. Take "before-and-after" photos of yourself standing in front of a full-length mirror about once a month. If smoking cessation is a struggle, forget about going "cold turkey." Set up a quit date while slowly reducing tobacco use every day and tracking triggers.

Welcome failure . . . then let it go!

In a Nike TV commercial, basketball legend Michael Jordan talked about missing more than 9,000 shots, losing almost 300 games, and missing game-winning shots 26 times, saying: "I've failed over and over again in my life. That is why I succeed." Each failure is part of the self-improvement process. Celebrate failures and accomplishments on the path to better health.

Call 201-478-5800 to schedule an appointment for a physical exam and health screenings before beginning any exercise program or for help quitting smoking through the MFHN Integrated Behavioral Health Care Team.

Know the Ups and Downs of **Thyroid Problems**

First you may notice your neck seems swollen and mistake it for a cold or flu symptoms. If the swelling remains, it's a telltale sign of possible thyroid problems.

The thyroid is a butterfly-shaped endocrine gland in the base of the front of the neck, just below the Adam's apple. It controls the body's metabolism, and converts iodine from food into hormones that impact every cell in the body – affecting your body temperature, energy level, mood, and weight. The thyroid gland plays a vital role in heart and digestive function, muscle control, brain development, and bone maintenance.

We don't think about the thyroid until it stops working properly and cannot balance hormones, which can cause serious long-term health problems, including higher cholesterol levels, cardiovascular disease, infertility, and osteoporosis. An estimated 20 million Americans have thyroid disease, and more than half are unaware, according to the American Thyroid Association.

Hyperthyroidism is a condition in which the thyroid is overactive and hormone levels are too high, causing the metabolism to speed up. With this condition, the body uses energy too quickly. Symptoms include anxiety, heat intolerance, increased heart rate, increased appetite, insomnia, memory problems, shaky hands, sweating, and weight loss.

Hypothyroidism is a condition in which the hormones levels are too low, causing the metabolism to slow down because the thyroid is underactive. Symptoms include coldness, constipation, depression, dry skin and hair, fatigue, high cholesterol, hoarseness, puffy face, swollen joints, and weight gain.

Thyroid diseases can affect anyone, from infants to seniors, and may develop as one ages. Thyroid diseases are five times more common in women than in men, especially women over age 60. Younger women with thyroid disease may experience changes in their menstrual cycle.

January is
Thyroid Awareness Month!

Thyroid disorder symptoms can look like signs of other diseases. Only your health care provider can diagnose it through an examination and blood test and prescribe treatment to manage this lifelong condition, so **call 201-478-5800 for an appointment.**

January is **National Birth Defects Prevention Month**

With every pregnancy, a woman has a 3% chance of delivering a baby with a birth defect, regardless of underlying health conditions or lifestyle factors, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Cleft lip, clubfoot, congenital heart defects, Down syndrome, hearing loss, and spina bifida, are the most common birth defects. They may be the result of genetic, infectious, nutritional, or environmental factors.

Many birth defects can be carried into adulthood. Advancements in medicine and surgery have led to better survival rates and improved quality of life for those born with birth defects. Although not all birth defects are preventable, the chances of having a healthy baby increase by managing health conditions and adopting healthy behaviors before becoming pregnant.

A healthy pregnancy begins before conception.

Get a medical checkup. See your MFHN provider before and during pregnancy. Your provider will ask about family health history, check your vital signs and bloodwork, recommend stopping or starting any medications, and prescribe prenatal vitamins.

Include folic acid in your daily plans. It can help prevent birth defects of the brain and spine. Folic acid is a B vitamin your body needs for normal growth and development. It can be found naturally in dark green, leafy vegetables like spinach and romaine lettuce; asparagus; avocado, bananas; beets; broccoli; citrus fruit; legumes; and wheat germ.

Prevent infection. Vaccines protect both mother and baby. Tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis vaccines are specifically recommended during pregnancy. Practice safe food handling and avoid cleaning cat litter boxes to protect against exposure to toxoplasmosis.

Do not smoke, drink alcohol, or take drugs. Cigarette smoke is linked to an increased risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Alcohol use boosts the risk for fetal alcohol spectrum disorders. These activities also put the baby at risk for very low birth weight, which can lead to developmental delays, cerebral palsy, blindness, and deafness.

Maintain a healthy weight. Obesity can increase your baby's chances of being born with heart defects and cleft palate. Eat nutritious foods, exercise, and try to get to a healthy body mass index (BMI) before pregnancy.

Control pre-existing conditions. Uncontrolled diabetes can damage the blood vessels in the placenta, limiting oxygen and nutrient supply into the womb, which can cause birth defects or stillbirth. The MFHN Diabetes Management Program can help you get and maintain control of your blood glucose.

Drop Pounds Without Focusing on the Scale

Nearly half of all Americans struggle with being overweight. Carrying extra pounds, especially around the waist, is like hauling a heavy package everywhere one goes. It drains energy and increases risk for heart disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer.

In 1993, Congress designated the third week of January as National Healthy Weight Week. The public health and awareness campaign serves to reinforce healthy eating, establish a positive body image, and make sustainable changes that result in long-term healthy weight maintenance.

Here are six tips to achieve healthy weight goals:

Ask your MFHN provider to assess your needs. Healthy weight varies from person to person. It's not just about scale numbers. Body Mass Index (BMI) and waist circumference provide some guidelines for setting healthy weight targets. Ask your MFHN provider to recommend a diet and fitness plan that suits your lifestyle and helps you measure results better.

Avoid fad diets. They offer no accurate way to measure success. Fad diets may include taking a pill and following a diet plan like switching from processed foods to whole foods or cutting carbs and adding more proteins. Any weight loss is likely due to the dietary change, not a pill that promises to "boost" metabolism and burn fat. Metabolism is controlled by genetics, hormones, and muscle mass.

Be on the move. Adults need at least 20 minutes of physical activity every day. Download a fitness app that counts steps, measures calories burned, and tracks daily progress. Add strength training to your workout. As you gradually adopt healthier eating habits and get stronger, you can shed the fat and gain lean muscle.

Rebuild your relationship with food. The motivation to eat healthier may come from a health scare, the desire for more energy to play with grandkids, or for better sleep. Carbs are not your enemy. Add colorful vegetables to every meal, from breakfast to dinner: spinach and cheese omelet, mushroom and fresh tomato sauce with pasta, beef and carrot stew, and more! Switch to low sodium deli meats and canned soups or make your own. Check out the U.S. Department of Agriculture 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines page to customize meals, learn about serving sizes, print resources, and watch educational videos: https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov

Reduce temptation. Willpower is not always an effective weight maintenance tool. Toss or donate junk food like cookies, pretzels, potato chips and any other high fat, "empty calorie" stuff. Avoid high-fructose corn syrup in everything!

Protect the "Gatekeeper" of Women's Reproductive Health

The cervix is a spongy, button-shaped tissue that connects the vagina to the uterus. It has a tiny hole in the middle to accommodate fertilization during sex, shedding of the uterine lining during menstruation, and contractions for childbirth. This muscular "gatekeeper" is also a common area for cell changes and abnormalities that gynecologists look for with Pap tests and pelvic exams.

Since 2009, Congress recognizes the importance of education, public awareness, and early detection in support of the goals of Cervical Health Awareness Month in January – a reminder for women to start the year by scheduling OB/GYN check-ups and preventive screenings.

Diseases and disorders of the cervix include bacterial and/or viral sexually transmitted infections (STI) like chlamydia, gonorrhea, herpes, and human papilloma virus (HPV) as well as cervicitis (an inflammation of the cervix), and cervical dysplasia (a precancerous condition). Approximately 11,270 women were diagnosed with cervical cancer, and 4,070 women died from it in the United States in 2009. Today about 14,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer each year, possibly due to increased screening, and the death rate is the same.

MFHN works to reduce disparities in cervical cancer, which is primarily caused by HPV. Although most STIs have symptoms such as unusual or increased vaginal discharge or bleeding, frequent or urgent urination, bloating, abdominal pain, or painful intercourse, the "silent" HPV is the most dangerous. HPV infects up to 80% of the population in their lifetime. Cervical cancer occurs in Hispanic women at more than twice the rate than that of Caucasian women; African-American women develop cervical cancer about 50% more often than white women. Half of the women diagnosed with cervical cancer are between 35 and 55 years of age, and approximately 20% of diagnoses are made in women older than 65.

Females and males ages 15 to 24 account for almost half of all STI incidents in the United States according to the Journal of the American Sexually Transmitted Diseases Association. The HPV vaccine is recommended for children ages 11 to 12; and for adults through age 26. Adults ages 27 to 45 may receive the HPV vaccine after speaking with their provider. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that Pap tests should begin by age 21.

Know your risk and protect your reproductive health.
Call 201-478-5800 to make an appointment with your MFHN provider for OB/GYN screenings.

February is National HEART MONTH

Six Unusual Heart Facts

The heart is a vital muscle, pumping around 2,000 gallons of oxygen-rich blood daily throughout the body. Like every muscle, it needs exercise. The heart responds to emotions and physical changes. It beats faster when we walk or run, and experience feelings of anxiety, fear, and intense joy and love. It beats slower when we relax.

Here are six unusual facts about the heart.

A woman's heart is smaller than a man's, but beats faster. The average adult male heart rate is between 70 and 72 beats per minute, while the average for adult females is between 78 and 82 beats, according to the National Library of Medicine. Since a woman's heart is smaller than a man's it must pump faster. Women also have a different rhythm to the pace of their hearts.

The heart has its own electrical grid. The heart's parts include walls, chambers, valves, blood vessels, and an electrical system "pacemaker" that sends out signals that cause the heart to contract. The "electrical charge" occurs in the upper right chamber, and travels through all four chambers into the ventricles to pump blood.

Laughter is good for the heart. Ever laugh until you cry or need to catch your breath? Keep the jokes and funny stories coming. Laugh out loud often! Laughter has benefits similar to a cardio workout. It can lower cholesterol and raise the heart rate, improving circulation. Laughter also boosts the immune system and the white blood cells that fight viruses and bacteria.

Heart cells do not reproduce, making heart cancer rare. This is good news for the heart. Normal cells grow, divide, and die. Cancer is a disease caused when one abnormal cell multiplies and spreads to surrounding tissues. However, when cardiac cells die due to heart disease, the heart loses muscle, which makes it work harder and can lead to death.

"Broken heart syndrome" is real. Cardiomyopathy occurs when the heart is suddenly stunned due to intense emotional or physical stress. The condition lasts about two months. Symptoms include shortness of breath, severe chest pain, low blood pressure, irregular heartbeat, and weakening of the left ventricle. It occurs most often in women, especially between the ages of 50 to 75. Broken heart syndrome risk is 70% higher in the six months after a spouse's death.

"Silent heart attacks" have few, if any, symptoms. People who experience a silent heart attack may think they have heartburn, the flu, or chest muscle strain. Imaging tests like an EKG are the only way to identify a silent heart attack. Risk factors are the same as those for any heart attack: age, family history, diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, tobacco use, and lack of exercise.

Regular checkups with your MFHN provider will keep your heart healthy. Call 201-478-5800 for an appointment.

Kids' Corner:

Do you brush your teeth twice a day? Do you know how to floss? Do you say "no" to sugary snacks and drinks? Do you see your dentist at least once a year?

Well maybe you don't always do all those things. But those things help keep your teeth and gums healthy and strong. You need healthy teeth for talking, chewing, and smiling!

When you don't brush as often as you should, eat bad snacks, and don't get check-ups, you can get cavities. Cavities are holes in teeth. If you do get cavities, eating and talking can hurt. The only one who can make it better is your dentist.

Your teeth change a lot while you are growing up. Your baby teeth are replaced with permanent teeth. Your dentist makes sure your teeth are growing right.

Dentists at MFHN are gentle and caring, so you have nothing to be frightened about. They will make sure you have the best smile! So, if you have not seen a dentist in a long time or if it's your first time, come to MFHN!