June is Preventive Health Month

Long-lasting diseases—including heart disease, cancer, and diabetes—are responsible for 7 of every 10 deaths in the U.S. each year. They account for 75 percent of the nation's health spending. But with a dose of preventive care, these diseases are largely avoidable and/or curable.

What is Preventive Care?

Preventive care is health care you receive to prevent or detect illness and disease before they become more serious problems. This can mean screenings, checkups, vaccines, counseling, and more.

The Importance of Prevention

Stopping disease and illness before they start or progress will improve not only our individual lives, but also the health of our homes, workplaces, schools, and communities.

- Today, nearly one in three U.S. children is overweight or obese—conditions that make them more likely to develop diabetes and heart disease. Studies show that **healthier children** are higher academic performers. They score higher in math, reading, and writing, and have better school attendance.
- **Healthier adults** are also more productive at work and work more days. Asthma, high blood pressure, smoking, and obesity have particularly negative effects on productivity, costing businesses up to $440 per person each year.
- **Healthier seniors** are more independent. They have improved mental and emotional health, and save on the higher health care costs associated with assisted living.

A Plan for Better Health and Wellness

The U.S. Surgeon General released a National Prevention Strategy in 2011 to increase the number of Americans who are healthy at every stage of life. This strategy relies on all parts of society to achieve four broad goals:

- Build healthy and safe community environments.
- Expand quality preventive services in clinical and community settings.
- Empower people to make healthy choices.
- Eliminate health disparities.

To help achieve these goals, the prevention strategy identified seven priority areas in which you can make a small changes to prevent major causes of preventable death and illness:

1. Avoid tobacco products.
2. Do not abuse drugs or drink alcohol in excess. The current recommendation is 0-2 alcoholic drinks per day for men and 0-1 alcoholic drinks per day for women.
3. Eat a nutritious and varied diet. Reduce your consumption of processed foods. Instead, fill your plate with whole foods: grains, proteins, fruits, and vegetables.
4. Adopt an active lifestyle. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Go on a walk over your lunch break. Spend weekends outdoors being active. Take your dog on an extra walk each day. Make small, habitual changes.
5. Live injury- and violence-free. Never drive while texting or under the influence of alcohol. If you or others bike throughout your community, brush up on road safety and rules. Perform balance exercises to decrease your risk of falling. Set strict expectations of yourself and your children about physical violence; seek counseling if necessary.
6. Maintain reproductive and sexual health. Discuss your sexual health history, STI testing, and birth control options with potential partners and your doctor. Follow standard recommendations during and after pregnancy to protect your health and the health of your baby.
7. Protect your mental and emotional wellbeing. Build strong, positive relationships with family and friends. Become more involved in your community, or form a community of your own. Encourage children and adolescents to participate in extracurricular and out-of-school activities.

-Courtesy of CDC.gov