

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: Paula Wimer, Program Manager 308-345-4223

The Importance of Women's Fitness

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) encourages women and girls to think about their individual needs and take steps to improve and maintain their health and fitness. Sedentary lifestyles, or not getting enough physical activity, are more common in women than in men. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), less than half of all women follow recommended guidelines for physical activity.

Why Does Fitness Matter for Women?

Fitness is useful for controlling weight, building lean muscle mass, and reducing excess fat. Regular physical activity helps women keep their joints healthy and fight against osteoporosis (weakening of bones). Regular exercise has been shown to reduce the risk of heart disease, which is the leading cause of death among women. It also helps fight against other forms of chronic disease such as diabetes, some cancers, and high blood pressure.

Fitness also improves women's mental health. Regular exercise helps to reduce stress hormones and has been shown to decrease anxiety and depression. About twice as many women as men have depression. Recent studies also link exercise to possible benefits for the prevention of dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

How Can Women Reach Fitness Goals?

Women sometimes experience barriers to fitness but find ways to overcome these challenges and improve their health. Many women find it difficult to fit in physical activity when they already spread their time between work, caring for children or other family members, keeping up a home, and other obligations.

Social support is one of the best ways to reach fitness goals. Women who get encouragement from family and friends, or who exercise with a partner or group, are more likely to maintain regular exercise programs. Women who maintain consistent physical activity are at lower risk for disease and experience an increased quality of life.

Walking is one of the easiest forms of exercise. SWNPHD has a free walking program called Walk to Health that is open to all residents of the nine-county health district. Walk to Health encourages woman (and men) to get up and move through easy and fun walking challenges throughout the year. The team challenge every spring is a good opportunity to build a support network of women working toward fitness goals together. Other challenges are found throughout the year.

SWNPHD recommends women work with their healthcare provider to find resources and come up with a fitness plan. There are also other programs at SWNPHD that offer free health screenings to help women know their health status, and health coaching to make progress toward their fitness goals. For more information or to schedule an appointment for any of these services, call 308-345-4223.

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. You can follow us on Facebook and Instagram or view the website at www.swhealth.ne.gov which contains many resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote and protect health. Call (308) 345-4223, one number three locations, McCook, Imperial, and Ogallala.

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